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Community Board 2 (Manhattan) Budget Testimony
Before the New York City Council
Mary 25, 2021

Good Morning Chairperson Dromm and Council Members:

My name is Bob Gormley. I am the District Manager of Community Board 2 in Manhattan. Last year, as both the City and the nation dealt with the impact and trauma of the pandemic, Manhattan Community Board 2 struggled mightily to continue to conduct its business and the business of its constituents by conducting one hundred fifty-five (155) public hearings and public meetings, most of them virtually, at which applications were reviewed, constituent concerns were considered and recommendations were made to New York City and New York State agencies. In addition, although mostly working from home, CB2 staff continued to respond to emails and telephone calls from residents and businesses in an effort to help them navigate this challenging environment. We continued to work to resolve constituent complaints and to provide information regarding the City's response to the pandemic.

On December 21, 2020, all the community boards in New York City received an email from the Office of Management and Budget directing us to reduce our fiscal year 2021 budgets by $3,628 and our fiscal year 2022 budgets by $8,153. This directive was driven by "budget challenges the City faces due to Covid-19." I was able to specify the FY 2021 cuts from our OTPS budget while gratefully knowing that we still had $5,500 from discretionary funds provided by Council Members Chin and Kallos that would get us through the remainder of the year. However, I explained to OMB that our total FY 2022 OTPS budget was only $7,181, which would leave us $972 short of the requested budget cut. Put another way, the FY 2022 cut would eliminate our entire OTPS budget meaning that we would have no City money to pay our cleaning person who comes in once every two weeks, make our quarterly copy machine payments, purchase paper, paper clips or staples or the various other items that are necessary to run an office.

We recognize that, despite guarded optimism regarding the City's economy, we have a long way to go before we are out of the woods. However, as the City's economy slowly rebounds and funds from the Recovery Act passed in Washington help make the City's economy more stable, we are hopeful that the City Council will see the wisdom of restoring all or, at least, part of the pre-pandemic community boards budgets. The money invested in community boards is a miniscule portion of the City budget and gives tremendous bang for the buck. We are a good investment. This committee, Speaker Johnson, and the entire City Council has always recognized the value of community boards and historically has rescinded most of the budget cuts proposed by the executive branch. We again need your support. Thank you.

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Alysha Lewis-Coleman, Board Chair Susan Stetzer, District Manager

City Council Hearing: Committee on Finance: Government Operations

Tuesday, May 25 at 10:00 AM

Susan Stetzer, District Manager, Manhattan Community Board 3

Thank you for this opportunity to testify regarding the community board budgets. In gathering information about our budgets, I came across many letters and emails from 2007 regarding the proposed budget cut. I was struck by a big difference between that proposed cut and the current one—transparency. In 2007 we had meetings and information with the administration to prepare for the cut. We had months to plan and to advocate.

Currently the community boards are not aware of the huge cut in our operating budgets. Last December we received an email instructing us to reduce our budget for FY21 and proposed budget for FY22. However, we were told in discussions that the cuts for FY 22 were not final and could depend on federal funds. When the executive budget came out this year, it stated.

*Request: Other community board facilities and staff requests Explanation: Community Boards had $8,000 removed from their budgets for the current fiscal year as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap. This money should be restored and increased so that base-lined operating budget can be used for contracts and salary. Responsible Agency: Mayor's Office of Management and Budget.*

The response is:

*In FY 2022 the community boards' budget is maintained.*

This inaccurate response should really be clarified for the community boards. This lack of transparency is why community boards do not know their budgets are being cut.

A few of us contacted OMB to confirm—and even then, the staff had to research this. We were told the cuts were not restored, but only verbally. I had to contact my council member's office for final confirmation of our budget.

Since the original removal of $8,000, another $3000 was removed, leaving my board with $0 OTPS. We are managing only on discretionary funds from our two City Council members—which OMB cannot touch.

We maintain that community boards are the "biggest bang for the buck" in New York City. Each Board has 50 members working without pay as part-time civil servants. The ability of the 59 Boards to perform their charter-mandated responsibilities must be supported by funding salary and operations by the small staff for each Board.

Community Boards partner with City agencies, making each more effective. This has been crucial during the pandemic when we worked with local nonprofits and agencies to deliver food and PPE to those in need. We worked with schools and parks and transportation to have

a system for the schools to use outdoor space. We continue to meet every other week with Health & Hospitals Test & Trace Corps to provide information and connection to those in need of testing and vaccinations. For the last one and a half years we have worked with agencies to meet needs in our community that have never existed before.

The ability for Community Boards to outreach to our communities is more important than ever. We have many new programs, such as Open Restaurants, Open Streets, Open Culture—that have confusing and conflicting regulations, especially with overlapping agencies such as NYC DOT and NYS Liquor Authority. Community Boards bridge the gap with information to businesses and residents and provide feedback to agencies. Our virtual meetings have allowed us to reach more people than ever, and we cannot meet demands for service delivery assistance and facilitating community input without maintaining our funding. We should be receiving additional funding for increased staff and technology.

The District Service Cabinet held monthly by each board has never been more crucial. At these interagency meetings we work collaboratively to try to understand and resolve new issues that have never been experienced before. In my District we are faced with increased drug use and drug dealing. Several months ago, we had a murder on the sidewalk because one drug dealer shot another over territory. Residents came to us because the scaffolding that had been up for years attracted this activity to their homes. The Community Board is now working with agencies and community and our Council Member to respond to these issues. Agencies have lost staff at a time when they are most needed; we are all forced to triage. This cannot be done without matching the needs of our particular communities with the abilities of the agencies. City Council representatives as well as those of our state representatives participate in these meetings—it is the only time we are all in one room.

As mandated by City Charter, we are currently participating in the budget process for FY 23. This is crucial at a time when Community Boards must provide Public Hearings for our community to have a voice in the City budget. As part of the budget process, we are currently working on our District Needs Statement—which is the only blueprint for what is needed in our District. Our expertise in understanding the needs our communities is crucial in a City the size of NYC.

Community Boards urge the City Council to restore our full budgets so that we can continue to work with our residents and businesses, our elected officials, and City agencies to fulfill our indispensable responsibilities.

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**LOWELL D. KERN**
Chair

**JESSE R. BODINE**
District Manager

**Testimony before Committee on Finance**
**Tuesday, May 25, 2021**

Good morning Chair Dromm and the fellow Council Members on the Committee on Finance. My name is Jesse Bodine and I have the privilege to be the District Manager of Manhattan Community Board 4, representing West Chelsea, Hudson Yards, and Clinton\Hell's Kitchen.

The last time I provided testimony before this body I was advocating for the continuation of the Council's dedicated increase to the Community Board budgets. We are certainly in a different time and place.

With no consultation and very little notice the Community Board budgets were cut by approximately $12,000 in Fiscal Year 2021 and apparently, these cuts will remain for Fiscal Year 2022. As some of you know from your personal experiences on Community Boards that we are responsible for meeting our City Charter mandates, adhering to all Open Meeting Laws, and providing city agencies and elected representatives with thoughtful and effective recommendations. And we do all this with an OTPS budget that hasn't had consistent baseline increase in decades.

The impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic has brought a lot of change to Community Board operations. It has clarified our strengths and our weaknesses. But what has not changed is our dedication to providing the communities we represent with a transparent and authentic access to the public process.

Within a matter of weeks of the city shutting down we trained our staff and our members and shifted to a completely virtual format. Virtual meetings have allowed us to reach more people than ever before but to sustain this operation will require resources. Without City Council restoring the cuts to our budget we will be essentially ignoring the benefits that virtual meetings have had on the public process. While I can only speak for my board, the demand for a hybrid virtual\in-person public meetings is a reality that we as an organization will need respond to.

For these reasons I urge this committee to recognize the cost effectiveness of restoring the budget cuts to Community Boards to pre-COVID-19 levels. I thank you today for your time and attention.

# Manhattan Community Board Five

Vikki Barbero, Chair

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Marisa Maack, District Manager

May 25, 2021

Testimony to New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing

Re: Community Board Budgets

As the community board representing Manhattan's central business district, we urge you to support the increase of the budget for community boards citywide.

Community boards play a vital and expansive role in the city's civic life. The City Charter tasks community boards with a wide array of formal duties – from the consideration of land use issues, to input on the city budget, to oversight of municipal service delivery.

Despite our weighty responsibilities, community boards are perennially underfunded and often lack the time, resources and expertise required to analyze issues, upkeep records and provide constituent services. Over the years, community board funding has largely stayed stagnant despite some city council one-year grants. Pegged to inflation, our budgets have actually shrunk over time.

In the CB5 Manhattan district, we are working on large multi-year, multi-agency development projects that will affect the future of NYC public transportation and tri-state commuter options as well as the future of economic activity in terms of central commercial real estate and tourism. Assessing these projects for community input requires the assistance of independent planners to assist the board in land use issues, attract and retain qualified employees, disseminate information to the community and conduct more public outreach, for example.

We acknowledge that the city faces many challenges and must make difficult choices with a limited supply of funding. However, we believe that the work community boards do has become even more important and a much needed avenue for a diverse perspective on the city's future.. With more resources, community boards would be better able to support the administration and City Council in carrying out important community initiatives.

Thank you for your consideration.

# COMMUNITY BOARD ELEVEN

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Nilsa Orama
*Chair*

Angel D. Mescain
*District Manager*


**Testimony of Environment, Open Space & Parks Committee**
**Manhattan Community Board 11**
**To the New York City Council Committee on Finance**
**Hearing on the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2022**

**Department of Sanitation**

Manhattan Community District 11 hosts three Department of Sanitation facilities; the Manhattan District 11 (M11) garage, the Manhattan District 10 (M10) garage, and the Manhattan Lot Cleaning Unit. The M11 garage is currently located on 99th Street and First Avenue, and will be relocated to a new temporary garage being constructed at 128th Street between Second Avenue and Third Avenue. The M10 garage which serves Central Harlem is located at 132nd Street and Park Avenue. The Manhattan Lot Cleaning Unit currently utilizes a surface parking lot on 123rd Street between Lexington Avenue and Third Avenue. Once the M11 garage is relocated to 128th street, our district will house three surface level open-air sanitation garages located within ten blocks of each other.

In order to resolve this undeserved burden on our community and direct violation of the City's Fair Share Mandate, CB11 proposed funding be allocated for the construction of a new state of the art consolidated facility to house the M11 and M10 garages. This request was incorporated in the 2016 East Harlem Neighborhood Plan and the subsequent 2017 East Harlem Rezoning Points of Agreement (POA) which states that the City would "plan for the development of an enclosed consolidated DSNY sanitation facility for M10 and M11, which meets LEED gold standards." The POA also states that "DSNY will immediately begin planning for a permanent, long-term facility to serve District 11 sanitation needs, which includes the following goals:

- explore options for a permanent consolidated facility that could house multiple garages, including: District 11, District 10, District 9, and/or the Manhattan Lot Cleaning Unit;
- assess suitable sites for the permanent facility that will serve residents for the next 100 years. Explore all City-owned sites and appropriate privately-owned sites in Manhattan Community Boards 9, 10, and 11, as well as potential acquisition of the entire Block 1792.

The City also committed to assemble an advisory group of community stakeholders that meets on a quarterly basis to assist DSNY in planning for a permanent solution and ensure environmental equity and fair share considerations are met. The Community Advisory Group (CAG) has met quarterly with DSNY for the past two years to identify a suitable site for the permanent garage. After discussing several recommended sites, all of which DSNY has deemed unfeasible, the CAG ultimately agreed that the potential acquisition of Block 1792 be explored as the site of the permanent consolidated garage. As the consolidated facility remains a top priority for Community Board 11, we were displeased to learn that, despite the City's commitment following the 2017 rezoning, the consolidated M10 and M11

garage is not included in the Department of Sanitation's 2022-2031 Ten Year Capital Strategy. Community Board 11 requests an explanation by DSNY for the omission of the facility in the capital commitment plan and urges the City to revise the plan for its inclusion.

**Department of Parks & Recreation**

The Vision Plan for a Resilient East Harlem highlights East Harlem's vulnerability to climate change and extreme weather events. East Harlem residents are particularly at risk of experiencing extreme heat in the summer months due to a variety of physical factors including high density and lack of green space.
The Vision Plan for a Resilient East Harlem recommends increasing street tree planting and stewardship to combat extreme heat. Community Board 11 requested more street trees and more forestry staff to maintain street trees in Fiscal Year 2022, however NYC Parks has not committed to accommodating these requests. In addition, funding for new street trees is provided, but funding to maintain existing street trees is not. Without funding and careful maintenance of new and existing street trees, these important neighborhood green assets will likely not survive long term. Ahead of the City's first Environmental Justice for All Report, the City should work toward resolving known issues identified in previous studies by dedicating funding to solutions also identified in those studies.

Additionally, Community Board 11 requested funding for the construction of comfort stations in Thomas Jefferson Park and Peter Minuit Playground, as well as for accessibility upgrades to the comfort station at P.S. 155 Playground. Unfortunately, the Department of Parks & Recreation does not have sufficient funding to accommodate these requests. Comfort stations are a necessity for any park, providing free bathrooms that are open to all and relief to park visitors during the warmer months. Further, clean and safe comfort stations are essential to human dignity. The city's lack of public bathrooms impacts every New Yorker, including parents with small children, people who are menstruating, pregnant women, senior citizens, the homeless, individuals living with incontinence or other related health issues, and more. We urge our elected officials to prioritize funding comfort stations in future budgets, and consider providing temporary bathrooms in parks during the summer months.

**TESTIMONY**

**NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**
**CHAIRMAN, DANIEL DROMM**

*New York City Council Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget Hearings*

**Presented on**
**Tuesday, May 25, 2021**




**The Council of School Supervisors and Administrators**
**Mark Cannizzaro, President**
**Henry Rubio, Executive Vice President**
**Rosemarie Sinclair, 1st Vice President**

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Thank you Chair Dromm, Chair Treyger, and distinguished members of the City Council for conducting this hearing. I am Mark Cannizzaro, the President of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA). On behalf of some 17,000 in-service and retired Principals, Assistant Principals, Educational Administrators, Supervisors and Directors/Assistant Directors of City-funded Early Childhood Centers, I appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the 2022 Executive Budget.

When I addressed you two months ago, I told you that CSA fully recognized the unprecedented impact the global pandemic had had upon the city and all its institutions, and most particularly upon its school system. Indeed, for the City of New York, the nation and the world, the coronavirus pandemic has been tragic, testing all our powers of ingenuity and resilience. I pointed out that our members, the city's school leaders, had been working relentlessly to provide online, in-person, and hybrid instruction and stability to all our children throughout this wrenching year. Most of our members had not taken a single day off and many had fallen ill from the virus and mourned family and staff who had passed away.

Today, then, I address you with a far greater sense of hope and a profound sense of gratitude. With no small thanks to you, the city has finally committed to fully funding our schools, according to its own formula, something CSA has been aggressively advocating for years, with an abundance of support from the City Council. Now, plans to fully reopen our schools are moving forward. The federal and state governments have allocated unprecedented funds to education, and I have faith that under the watchful eye of the Council, these funds will be responsibly deployed. I truly believe that many of the triumphs we hope to celebrate in the months ahead are more likely to become realities because of your vigilance. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your fidelity to New York City Public Schools in the worst of times and the best. And I would like to bring your attention to a few matters that bear your continued attention lest good opportunities be squandered.

Due to the dedicated advocacy of Senator Chuck Schumer and others, President Biden's $1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act allows for access to vaccines for every school leader, teacher, and school staff member. In addition, a new round of unprecedented coronavirus relief is on its way to schools. It is already clear that state and local cuts to preK-12 classrooms will be greatly minimized, particularly those classrooms serving students from low-income households. It is the prudent use of this infusion that I would like to address here. Because of our mutual advocacy, some critical issues have already been favorably resolved.

**SCHOOLS WILL BE HELD HARMLESS FOR REGISTER LOSS IN FISCAL YEAR 2021**

In March, I implored you to urge the administration to hold every school harmless for enrollment losses during the 2020-2021 school year. I pointed out that the unpredictable nature of the pandemic had recently come home to roost in the form of "register reconciliation," which threatened to undercut school budgets. No one at the DOE, or in city government, could not have predicted the register loss schools would suffer because of this pandemic. Nor could school leaders have foreseen the possibility. But in fact, 4 to 6% of families turned to smaller classrooms in private schools or fled the city for less congested parts of the country or to look after vulnerable family members far away. Nevertheless, in first-round audits, the city charged many of our principals hundreds of thousands of dollars to reconcile anticipated enrollment with actual enrollment. CSA fought hard against this injustice, and, with your backing, we ensured that principals would not be forced to sacrifice assistant principals, guidance

counselors and teachers at a time when children need those people most. Not long later, Chancellor Porter announced that schools with enrollment drops would no longer be penalized for that which they could not control.

**FAIR STUDENT FUNDING (FSF) BECOMING A REALITY AT LAST**

I know you join us in celebrating the monumental victory for Fair Student Funding. Last I spoke to you, I reemphasized the fact that FSF was already underfunded by approximately $700 million. It was obvious that additional cuts could not be borne if our children were ever to recover from the learning loss and emotional trauma of this pandemic. I said that considering the magnitude of the past year's educational tragedy, FSF must be increased to 100% immediately. I stressed that the learning crisis prevalent among students who have been deprived of traditional schooling for as long as 12 to 18 months, would now likely be exacerbated by a crisis of clinical depression. Then in April, Mayor Bill de Blasio, City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, and Schools Chancellor Meisha Porter were able to come to an agreement and announce a historic investment to bring 100 percent "Fair Student Funding" (FSF) for all New York City public schools funded by FSF for the first time ever.

**AN ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL IN EVERY SCHOOL IS AGREED UPON**

By way of reminder, in our last contract, the DOE and CSA agreed that having an assistant principal in every school is a best practice. And I maintain that it is more than a best practice in the age of coronavirus and its aftermath; it is a necessary practice. Assistant principals are curricular and extracurricular schedulers, student safety officers, organizers of schoolwide data, parent engagement specialists, and experts on many compliance-related issues. Without at least one AP in every school, we will never succeed in reopening schools completely. We ask that you continue to support us in ensuring adequate school supervision.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL LEADERS**

There has been no greater supporter of CSA's Educational Leadership Institute (ELI) than the City Council. Once again, you have ensured the necessary funding for ELI to fulfill the tremendous training needs for NYC's school leaders. Thanks to you, training in social and emotional learning (SEL) will continue to be at the forefront of professional development in the year to come. SEL has been a major emphasis of CSA's Educational Leadership Institute (ELI), which, I am proud to say, has long been adept at anticipating the needs of school leaders. I thank you once again for being ELI's you greatest champion.

Thanks to renewed funding, ELI will continue to partner with Marc Brackett at the Yale Center for Emotional Development to create an evidence-based approach to addressing the uncertainty and anxiety children and their families have been experiencing during the pandemic. ELI's Advanced Leadership Program for Aspiring Principals (ALPAP) will also continue to move forward in developing new leaders as it becomes increasingly more challenging to recruit, train and retain them. Furthermore, ELI will be able to continue and improve its two-year Educational Leadership program, which is cost-free for participants. The program is designed to support newly assigned Assistant Principals, Education

Administrators, Early Childhood Directors and Assistant Directors. These and several more professional development programs continue on the right track, thanks to you.

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

I thank you for your response to the Mayor's Fiscal 2022 Prelimary Budget in which you advocated that the city allocate $21 million funds to support community-based early childhood education directors and assistant directors. Please continue to insist that these dedicated educators are provided with the fair pay they deserve, particularly after their heroic efforts since March of 2020. The plight of working parents throughout the pandemic, particularly parents with very small children, has been widely publicized. In the past unprecedented year, many of these early childhood learners have been the offspring of essential workers. Now, as more parents strive to return to the post-pandemic workplace, many more of these early learners are going to need our attention. By September, when unemployment insurance runs out, that need is quite likely to explode.

Our Early Childhood Directors and Assistant Directors will continue be on the front lines of the heroic work of re-opening their centers. Please continue to stand by us in working to eliminate the shocking disparities in their pay and working conditions. It is no secret to you that compared with their colleagues in the DOE, our Early Childhood Directors and Assistant Directors barely make a living wage. Over the years, CSA has tried to raise awareness of the inequities they face on a daily basis and to point out that the majority of them are professional women of color. These inequities indeed reflect a shameful "Tale of Two Cities" and must be addressed now.

**AN UNFATHOMABLE OPPORTUNITY MUST NOT BE SQUANDERED**

The formidable opportunity provided by the American Rescue Plan must not be squandered. The stage has been set for success and the mayor and the DOE must recognize their past mistakes, provide schools with the needed support and resources, and then get out of the way. I do remain concerned that a history of indecision and micromanagement will impede school leaders' ability to be as successful as possible. I call upon the City Council to urge the mayor to resist his impulse to run our schools from City Hall.

I particularly call upon you to convince him of the need to be more nimble and decisive about the reopening of schools in September. He continues to be vague about whether all parents will choose the mode of instruction or if remote instruction will be limited to students with medical concerns or other specific circumstances. It is essential to summon the courage to address families right now

The mayor says there is still a lot of time to make these decisions. This betrays a certain lack of understanding of what it takes to program a school for optimal student success. It is reminiscent of his attitude last year, which resulted in a delayed start of school and frequent dizzying changes of heart and strategy. To avoid a repeat, school leaders need to know now which students and staff will be in the building in September and how remote instruction will be handled for those who are not.

I believe the City Council recognizes that we have before us an opportunity not to be missed. I believe you understand that common sense decisions communicated to principals with sufficient time for thoughtful implementation can make all the difference in restoring the community's faith in public schools. Please stand with us to make sure that happens.

Once again, I thank you for the opportunity to address you all today and share our joys and concerns. As always, I look forward to working with you in transforming so much promise into reality.

Mark Cannizzaro

**New York City Arts in Education Roundtable**

*Budget Request to New York City Council for Fiscal Year 2022*

The New York City Arts in Education Roundtable (NYCAIER) is a non-profit service organization working to improve and advance the state of arts education in New York City's schools and beyond. We build our efforts around the values that (1) arts are essential in our schools and (2) arts education is a right for all New York City students.

We recognize the past year has been difficult for many sectors, arts education among them. The challenges of devastating budget cuts and reassignment of arts teachers to accommodate remote learning have prevented critical arts education services and instruction from reaching students since last March, and oftentimes from reaching the students who are underserved and need it most.

As our city begins to rebuild and envision a post-pandemic era, it is imperative we prioritize arts education for all New York City students as part of our city's recovery process. Research and practices show that an arts-rich education from pre-K through 12th grade can lead to increased academic and social-emotional skill development as well as higher attendance and graduation rates. By investing in arts education, we can provide critical opportunities to actively engage students needing specialized curriculum—specifically students with disabilities and multilingual learners who have lost instructional time and access to mandated services. With so much at stake in the upcoming school year, the need for arts in our schools has never been more clear.

We acknowledge that the City Council is facing difficult decisions. However with this challenge comes the opportunity to reimagine education to center what makes New York the greatest city in the world: our rich cultural diversity and expansive arts opportunities. Restoring funding to arts education means a commitment to advancing equity in our schools, creating thousands of jobs within the cultural sector, and supporting the social emotional wellbeing of our students. NYCAIER is seeking your support in ensuring that funding for arts education is restored and that the infrastructure for arts education is not lost. As the FY 2022 city budget is developed and NYC DOE continues to adjust to the dynamics of our new world, the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable is seeking the following:

- Ensure **full Fair Student Funding (FSF) formula**, which makes up a majority of a school's budget, and that any possible reductions do not disproportionately impact arts education.
- Ensure **full funding of the Schools Allocation Memorandums (SAM)**, which provides schools with funding to implement programming and buy supplies, and change the "Arts Supplemental Funding thru Fair Student Funding" SAM from a recommendation to a required minimum spending on the arts.
- **Restore the $15.5M reduction to Arts Services, and reinstate allocation to 2015-2016 funding level of $26M.** This budget cut has decimated school contracts with non-profit cultural institutions struggling to survive amid lost revenue at a time when community partners are needed on the frontline of the recovery process.
- **Restore $17.3M in funding for the Cultural After School Adventures (CASA) program and $3.3M for the SU-CASA program**, supported by public funds from the New York City Council in partnership with the Department of Cultural Affairs.
- Prioritize funding the Office of Arts & Special Projects Strategic Arts Plan to close the equity gap and address high-quality arts instruction for all students.

When coupled with reductions to the Department of Youth and Community Development and Department of Cultural Affairs who provide cultural institutions with much-needed funding to help schools meet NYSED guidelines, maintaining these budget cuts will deprive NYC students of an equitable education. This school

year, and every subsequent year, the arts will be key to re-igniting students' learning in the post-COVID-19 era and preparing them for success and joy in a complicated 21st century world. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

**About NYC Arts in Education Roundtable:**
NYCAIER represents thousands of teaching artists in every discipline and over 500 of NYC's cultural organizations (including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Dance Theater of Harlem, Brooklyn Academy of Music, NY Philharmonic, ArtsConnection, DreamYard, Apollo Theater, and many more). We are a community of cultural organizations and educators that shares resources, provides professional development, and advocates for the needs of these students, educators and culture organizations to foster inspiring and creative learning environments. Our primary function is to ensure the sustainability of the arts education field and to promote a culture of continuous improvement from lessons learned in classrooms and through research.

NYC EMPLOYMENT + TRAINING COALITION

THE STRONG VOICE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

**Testimony by Annie Garneva,**

**Vice President of Policy and Special Initiatives**

**at the New York City Employment and Training Coalition (NYCETC)**

**Committee on Finance**

**New York City Council Executive Budget Hearings- Finance**

**May 25, 2021**

My name is Annie Garneva, the Vice President of Policy and Special Initiatives at the New York City Employment and Training Coalition (NYCETC). NYCETC is the voice of New York's workforce development community and we work to ensure that every New Yorker has access to the skills, training, and education needed to thrive in the local economy, and that every business is able to maintain a highly skilled workforce. With over 180 members serving half a million New Yorkers, NYCETC works with community-based organizations, educational institutions and labor management organizations to improve policy, practices, and outcomes to achieve economic inclusion for the city's workers, job-seekers and employers.

NYCETC's members, which reside in and serve all of the city's 51 council districts, provide job training and employment opportunities for New Yorkers of all socioeconomic backgrounds and levels of education. Simply put: Our members create jobs and connect underserved New Yorkers -- primarily New Yorkers of color, New Yorkers with low- or moderate-incomes, New Yorkers with multiple barriers to employment, New Yorkers who have been left out of the growing economy due to systemic and historic marginalization -- to opportunities so they can support their families. They are the beginning of a cycle that connects New York City residents to economic opportunities that exist within all of the industries that call New York home.

The dual health and economic consequences of the pandemic have had uniquely destructive consequences on our local and national economy, and magnified flaws and inequities that have long held New Yorkers back from thriving in our city, and businesses from having access to the highest quality local talent. A true recovery for all New Yorkers means being intentional about how we invest in people, community and systems, including getting New Yorkers -- especially those with systemic

barriers distinguished by race, gender, and socioeconomic status -- back to work in good, quality jobs and careers; dedicating assets toward communities and neighborhoods that have experienced disinvestment; and infrastructure that will ensure optimal performance for all stakeholders served by the workforce development ecosystem.

In order to ensure an equitable and inclusive economic recovery, City leadership and agencies need to fundamentally shift and align systems, investments and decision-making processes that fuel our economy toward a talent-centric economic development model. This framework of economic development recognizes human capital as the primary pillar and source of prosperity and growth within our communities and among our businesses, in tandem with traditional approaches that solely consider labor-market demands and capital infrastructure.

Within the proposed budget, this means bringing back workforce programs that were severely cut last year that I will highlight - (1) **Bridge Program for Workforce Development**; (2) **the Digital Inclusion and Literacy Initiative;** and (3) the **Job Training and Placement Initiative**.

In 2014, the Mayor commissioned the "Jobs for New Yorkers Task Force" in order to "harness the experience, knowledge and expertise from this diverse group of business, education and community leaders to expand opportunity for more hardworking New Yorkers." The result was a workforce development blueprint that set specific budgetary commitments, including a promise of $60 million to be allocated annually by 2020 for "bridge programs" that provide New Yorkers with basic skill deficits or barriers to employment, the education and training required to launch a career of their own. Last year, this program was only funded at $850,000 through a Council initiative and as a pilot program, with limited contribution from the administration. Within the FY22 budget, we urge the administration to make good on the Career Pathways blueprint and begin funding these promises, including $20 million for bridge programs in order to ensure access to growth careers for HRA recipients and other vulnerable New Yorkers.

As the city continues to explore avenues to close the digital poverty gap, for all New Yorkers, including for workers and learners seeking workforce development services, the City must invest in programs that proactively help close that gap. The Digital Inclusion and Literacy Initiative allows service providers to deliver computer-based training and learning, technical skill development, improve internet access, and offer free public streaming services and must, at minimum, be brought back to FY 2020 numbers of $3 million and expanded past that to respond to urgent need.

As the city begins to reopen and New Yorkers re-enter the job market we must help provide services that are focused on improving participants' career prospects. These include industry training and upskilling programs, job placement, small business technical assistance, and programs that address specific client needs such as ESOL classes, High School Equivalency preparation, computer literacy, and

general work readiness preparation. In FY 2020, the Job Training and Placement Initiative faced over $2 million in cuts and similarly must be brought back to FY 2020 numbers of $7.9 million at minimum if not expanded to respond to the programmatic and service needs of forgotten New Yorkers.

If workforce organizations are short-changed, it will be at the expense of New Yorkers of color, low- and moderate-income New Yorkers, and other historically marginalized communities. To get New York back to work, we need your leadership and critical funding resources so that those hurt most by the pandemic, and the city at large, can begin to recover.

While these are immediate investment needs that we have identified, returning these Council initiatives to FY20 levels is the bare minimum. The City must develop and invest in a serious workforce and economic recovery plan to tackle the scale of unemployment and business loss that New York City is facing. With resources allocated for workforce development on their way from the American Jobs Plan, now is the time for this administration and Council to expand investments and collaborations in education, job training, employment services, and economic development to best position New Yorkers to re-enter the workforce. We need a Marshall Plan for training and jobs aligned to industries projected to have significant growth over the next 10 years and shovel ready infrastructure projects that grow the economy and provide career pathways rather than low-wage jobs. We need to map the workforce development system to provide a skills bank and database for workers, training providers and employers to increase effectiveness and access to programming. And we need to collect, communicate and use data to align the real-time talent needs of employers across industries to investments in training programs throughout the city by philanthropy and government agencies.

The current FY22 budget does not reflect the scale of workforce needs that millions of New Yorkers have, and does not provide us with an adequate and visionary jobs plan that would help propel us out of the recession we are in. There has never been a more important moment, both in terms of depth of challenges and opportunities, for us to fundamentally change the trajectory of economic growth for our city as a whole and especially for the communities that New York City's workforce development training providers serve who have been marginalized and locked out for too long. The workforce development field must be at the forefront of the recovery and growth that comes from it, and we ask for your support and partnership in ensuring that workforce development organizations and clients are fully supported.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these matters. We at the Employment and Training Coalition would be happy to answer any questions from the Council to the best of our ability.

**The New York City Council Committee on Finance**

**FY22 Executive Budget Hearing**

**May 25th, 2021**

**Testimony of the New York Immigration Coalition**

**and New Yorkers for Racially Just Public Schools**

Good afternoon and thank you Chair Dromm and members of the New York City (NYC) Council Committee on Finance for this opportunity to testify. My name is Alejandra Vázquez Baur, and I am a member of the New Yorkers for Racially Just Public Schools (RJPS) Steering Committee and an Education Policy Consultant at the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC). RJPS is a citywide education justice coalition that brings together parents, students, educators, and advocates aimed at centering racial equity in policy and budget decisions for public education. The NYIC is an advocacy and policy umbrella organization for more than 200 immigrant and refugee rights groups across the state.

We deeply appreciate the City Council's leadership during these unprecedented and devastating times. We are here to offer testimony on behalf of the New Yorkers for Racially Just Public Schools about the dire need for a transformational budget that meets the needs of our most systematically excluded and under-resourced students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and immigrant families.

For over a year now, we have seen how public education has undergone countless seismic and abrupt shifts. Unfortunately, throughout these changes, immigrant (and undocumented) students, students with disabilities, students in temporary housing and foster care, students involved in the juvenile or criminal justice system, and students in racially- and economically-marginalized communities have been left behind and excluded from the rooms where major decisions are made. New York City has a critical opportunity with this budget to transform the damaging status quo of education funding practices.

Over a dozen community organizations and hundreds of parents in the RJPS coalition informed our consolidated New York City Education Budget Demands. To highlight a few:

- **Invest $559 million for Supportive Schools**, which would include funding for an **expansion of Community Schools** and would help **eliminate policing in schools**, with restorative practices and added socioemotional supports.
- **Allocate $1 billion for Culturally Responsive Schools,** which would include funding for a 3-year push to develop CRSE skills and expertise, expand CRSE and Ethnic studies curricula, and create an Office of Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education (CRSE) within the Chancellor's Office.

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- **Allocate $1 billion for Inclusive Schools** that includes $350M over three years for ELLs and immigrant families and $500,000 for data disaggregation

**Inclusive schools:**

**Ensuring ELLs and immigrant families, students with disabilities, and other historically marginalized populations are centered and prioritized in education policy is a pivotal tenent of the RJPS platform**. Our Inclusive Schools budget demands include $350 million investment to address immigrant students and families' unique needs, as they have historically and consistently been neglected. In order to ensure our immigrant students and families finally have what they need to thrive, **we demand that the City and the DOE[1]:**

**1. Urgently develop and implement a plan for catching up ELLs and students with Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents: $186.8 million**

- Develop and offer robust, targeted academic support for ELLs and students from LEP families in schools, including ELLs with disabilities.
- Create and offer ELL summer school for students in K - 12th grade that fully incorporates early childhood students (K-2nd grade) and ELLs with disabilities.
- Identify and publicly announce the scope of investment and metrics of success for this effort. And clearly specify how the DOE and which leaders will own monitoring the impact of a targeted academic support plan for these students and families.

**2. Offer grants to Community Based Organizations (CBOs) well-positioned to support ELLs and immigrant families: $60 million**

City Council and the DOE should fund CBOs and schools that provide additional academic programming to students, facilitate family engagement, and assist families with communication. The following programs should be prioritized:

- Afterschool for ELLs, ELLs with disabilities, and students with LEP families.
- Saturday programs for ELLs, ELLs with disabilities, and students with LEP families.
- Family engagement and community education programs for LEP families.
- In-person support for ELLs, ELLs with disabilities, and LEP families, where feasible.

**3. Fully fund and implement the NYIC's Education Collaborative's Communications Plan: $103.7 million**

[1] These demands were originally drafted and released by the New York Immigration Coalition's Education Collaborative as the 2021 NYIC Education Collaborative ELL Roadmap and accompanying NYIC Education Collaborative ELL Roadmap Budget. These and all other relevant documents are included at the bottom of the testimony.

City Council and the DOE are relying on families to ensure their children are learning at home; therefore they must ensure that families have reliable access to important information and resources. To this end, the DOE needs to drastically transform its communications infrastructure by:

- Avoiding sole reliance on online and email communication.
- Focusing significant resources on forms of communication that are more accessible and easier to understand for LEP families, such as phone calls, letters on paper, videos, and face-to-face interactions, etc.
- Adapting strategies to be inclusive of families who speak Languages of Limited Diffusion and those with low literacy and/or low digital literacy.
- Centrally tracking and monitoring school-based engagement of immigrant families.

**Current Context:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored and exacerbated the existing inequities in New York City's public school system. Even before this public health crisis, our ELLs, children of Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents, and immigrant speakers of languages of limited diffusion (LLD) had been consistently left behind. According to 2020 data, ELLs continue to have the highest dropout rate (23%) of any subgroup in New York City. Additionally, in 2019, only 19% of ELLs were proficient in math.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, many immigrant families have struggled with illness and loss, unemployment, food and housing insecurity, and the threat of deportation. The existing barriers in access and support for our immigrant students and families during remote/blended learning has only compounded the inequities and injustice faced by our communities. Members of the NYIC's Education Collaborative have flagged the following issues as the most prevalent academic barriers immigrant families have experienced since the transition to remote learning in March 2020.

**1. Lack of appropriate communication and language access:** During the pandemic, the NYC Department of Education (DOE) has relied on parents to play a critical role in supporting their children's education at home, yet they have struggled to reach immigrant and LEP families in their home language and via accessible forms of communication that do not rely on families having access to the internet. Community leaders across the city report that schools are not informing families about what services and supports that are available for ELLs and students with disabilities. This has been especially hard for families that speak languages of limited diffusion and for parents who are not literate and/or not digitally literate. According to a NYIC survey, 36% of parents/guardians said that they had not received information/assignments from the school in the language spoken at home, and almost 30% of families surveyed in the summer of 2020 said their school had not communicated plans for the fall semester. This is unacceptable.

**2. Academic regression:** The families that we work with are rightfully concerned that immigrant students are disproportionately left behind academically due to the pandemic and school closures. Schools have admitted to our member organizations that they are not providing the full set of ELL services students are legally entitled to, including a lack of ENL instruction, bilingual staff to offer pre-COVID services, and bilingual special education services. According to our survey, 40% of participating parents/guardians signaled that schools' inadequate special education services and their children's complex disabilities are affecting their child's participation in remote learning. Furthermore, we have found that some newcomer ELLs are not even being identified as needing ELL services. Last year's dire trends for ELLs, as seen in the achievement data (graduation/dropout rates, performance exams, etc), signify that a significant number of ELLs were already left behind to begin with.

**3. Inadequate and insufficient family engagement:** Immigrant families have struggled to support their children's remote and/or blended schooling due to major gaps in culturally-sustaining family engagement. While resources and events have been organized for immigrant families, the DOE has not done enough to meaningfully engage and support immigrant families in accessing them. Moreover, since the DOE has largely relied on schools to implement policies and communicate with families, immigrant families' experiences have been dependent on the infrastructure and level of care and available resources of their school communities. Many of the families who are most in need have had the greatest difficulties engaging with their school communities. Better strategies are desperately needed to get resources and opportunities to LEP families.

When students return to in-person learning in the fall, they must return to a better and more equitable system. It is not enough to go back to the status quo. It is time to transform our schools and end dysfunctional dynamics for immigrant children and families.

The NYIC and RJPS appreciate the City Council's concern for students of color, ELLs, and immigrant families. We look forward to continuing to partner together to address these urgent challenges and ensure that our youth have the opportunities they deserve given their enormous potential. The New York Immigration Coalition thanks Chair Dromm and the members of the Committee of Finance for this opportunity to testify.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

*Submitted by:*

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**References**


- RJPS New York City Education Budget Demands
- 2021 NYIC Education Collaborative ELL Roadmap
- NYIC Education Collaborative ELL Roadmap Budget
- NYIC Education Collaborative's CBO Grant Proposal
- NYIC Education Collaborative's Communications Plan

**New York City Council – Committee on Finance**

**COUNCIL FISCAL YEAR 2022 EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARINGS**

**Testimony from the New York Immigration Coalition**
**May 25, 2020**

Good Morning. My name is Theodore A. Moore and I'm the Director of Local Policy and Legislation at the New York Immigration Coalition, an umbrella policy and advocacy organization that works statewide with over 200 immigrant-serving member organizations. Thank you to Chair Dromm and the members of the City Council Finance Committee for convening this important hearing and allowing us the opportunity to submit testimony on the organization's budget and policy priorities for the upcoming fiscal year.

In confronting an unprecedented pandemic, NYC's health care systems must provide access to culturally responsive and affordable physical and behavioral health care for all of the city's immigrants. This begins restoring any and all cuts associated with healthcare from the last fiscal year including restoring **Access Health NYC** funding to its FY2020 level of $3.25 million and ensuring that NYC public health programs are held harmless by state matching fund reductions. We would also like to see $13 million allocated to make the **Connections to Care pilot** a permanent program and expand it to more immigrant-serving and immigrant-led CBOs so they can offer mental health services through co-location, staff training and technical assistance. Also there should be an acknowledgement of the crucial role that CBOs have had in reaching the communities hardest hit by COVID-19 with information related to testing and contact tracing. Their contracts should be extended and expanded to include vaccine-related outreach and education, and to be sustained throughout the City's pandemic response.

The COVID crisis has underscored and exacerbated the existing inequities in the City's public school system. Even before COVID-19, our English Language Learners (ELLs), children of Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents, and adult immigrant learners have been left behind. ELLs continue to have the highest dropout rate (23%) of any subgroup in New York City, and only 19% of ELLs are proficient in math. Therefore, NYIC's Education Collaborative needs your support

- For urgent development and implementation of a plan for catching up ELLs and students with Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents that includes ELL summer school for students in K-12th grade and fully incorporates students in K-2nd grade, ELLs, ELLs with disabilities, and students with LEP families.

- To Invest of $20 Million dollars annually for at least three years ($60M total) for grants to community-based organizations (CBOs) and schools already well-positioned to support ELLs and immigrant families to provide additional academic programming to students, facilitate family engagement, and assist families with language access and communication.
- For implementation and fully fund the Education Collaborative's Communications Plan, meaningfully engage immigrant families, and avoid sole reliance on online and email communication.
- To restore and baseline $12M for Adult Literacy Funding so that thousands of immigrant and other adult learners do not lose their seats in English language programs across the city. Without sufficiently funding accessible, community-based adult education programming, we further isolate the 2.2M adults who still lack English language proficiency, a high school diploma, or both.
- Fund the NYCCAL Adult Literacy Pilot at $10.5M to invest four times the funding for adult literacy providers and cover the actual cost of service for adult literacy programming while including new indicators of quality outcomes focused on COVID relief.

From adult literacy we'd also like to address Language Access in New York City. There are still significant barriers to language access for New York's immigrant communities, particularly those who speak languages of limited diffusion (LLDs). To build on recent gains in this area we propose that the Council support the creation a Community Legal Interpreter Bank (CLIB) modeled after the one that has been used successfully since 2007 in the District of Columbia to expand language access and increase the supply of trained, vetted immigration legal interpreters by committing $2.25 million dollars through a City Council budget initiative to be provided to community-based nonprofit organizations. To better serve LLD's we are also proposing that the funding for the NYC Council's Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative be increased by $750,000 dollars to enable immigrant community-based organizations to develop and launch three language services worker-owned cooperatives—one for African Languages of Limited Diffusion (LLDs), one for Asian LLDs, and one for indigenous Latin American LLDs.

And while I know this is a budget hearing I want to highlight a few pieces of legislation that we are supporting. Last thing I want to mention would be passing Intro 1867 and permitting lawful permanent residents and those authorized to work in the United States to vote in municipal elections for city offices. New York City can and should do more than play defense when it comes to democracy. That means making a bold statement that residents who work here, go to school here, raise families here, and pay taxes here deserve to vote here and to have a say in the direction of our city.

The final organizational priority I would like to mention is renewal of the $58.2 million in funding for immigration legal services to ensure continuity of services and to help defend immigrants

against the aggressive, anti-immigrant policies from Washington that continue even during this pandemic. Now I would like to state that the NYIC does not feel that we require any additional sources of revenue to fund our proposal. All these can and should be funded in spite of the deficit. That being said, we should address the NYPD's current $6 billion dollar budget. An over-bloated budget that is larger than what NYC spends on health, homeless services, youth development, and workforce development combined. We support a dramatic reduction of funding for the NYPD by at least $1 billion. Those funds should be reviested in long ignored and underfunded communities for healthcare, education, housing and other programs that help communities be safe and thrive.I

**Testimony of Carlos Castell Croke**
**Associate for NYC Programs**
**New York League of Conservation Voters**

**City Council Committee on Finance**
**FY22 Executive Budget Hearing**
**May 25, 2021**

Good afternoon, my name is Carlos Castell Croke and I am the Associate for New York City Programs at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV represents over 30,000 members in New York City and we are committed to advancing a sustainability agenda that will make our people, our neighborhoods, and our economy healthier and more resilient. I would like to thank Chair Dromm and all of the Council Members on the committee for the opportunity to testify today.

NYLCV supports a Fiscal Year 22 City budget that secures progress on many of the environmental, transportation, and public health priorities Mayor de Blasio has committed to in OneNYC and beyond. Our city is on the road to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is incumbent upon our elected leaders to invest our tax dollars in climate action and solutions as we rebound from this crisis and not lose ground, especially with the influx of relief funds coming in from the Federal Government.

NYLCV is pleased to see the Mayor reinvesting in the environment through the revival of the curbside composting pilot and a commitment to electrify our city's school buses. These two initiatives are critical steps towards reducing our emissions, cleaning our streets and air, and protecting our vulnerable communities that have been overburdened by decades of environmental racism. It is imperative that the City provide adequate funding for these programs and, in the case of curbside organic waste, that we rapidly roll the program out citywide. We are also happy that there will be significant investments in pedestrian safety through funding for speed cameras, bikes lanes, and open streets.

While federal dollars are providing the financial relief needed to implement these critical initiatives, there is still much more we must do to make a permanent commitment to the environment.

Parks and other green spaces are one of the city's most valuable environmental assets and are a major source of the city's urban canopy, which mitigates climate change, provides clean air

and habitats for native wildlife, and contributes to the well-being of our residents and economy. Preserving these spaces is a top priority for NYLCV.

But over the past year, through the hardships of the pandemic, we have seen the cleanliness and safety of our parks drop significantly due to unfair budgetary cuts to staffing and programs, which also impacts access to parks for people most in need. Due specifically to the $45 million in cuts to seasonal staff spending and forestry contracts last year, parks saw one of their worst years for cleanliness on record.

Therefore, in this critical 3rd year of our play fair campaign, we ask the council to Play Fair Now and restore $78.9 million in the FY22 Parks budget to ensure our parks are safe, clean and accessible. *NYLCV and the entire Play Fair Coalition requests this funding be allocated in the following ways:*

- *Baseline **$10M** to make permanent 100 City Park Workers and 50 Gardeners, and create secure, stable jobs.*
- ***$30M** to restore the critical Seasonal staff budget for maintenance and operations workers citywide.*
- ***$3M** to restore the Parks Opportunity Program and provide a pathway to full-time employment.*
- ***$4.5M** for NYC's natural forests, wetlands, and trails to receive the proactive care and maintenance they need to remain healthy and resilient in our changing climate, and as they receive unprecedented use by New Yorkers.*
- ***$15M** to restore critical parks forestry contracts for tree pruning, stump removal and sidewalk repair, and invasive species control.*
- ***$4M** to restore the Parks Equity Initiative, and support park stewardship organizations citywide.*
- ***$3.4M** to restore 15 GreenThumb staff, and expand access to plant materials, resources and tools for community gardeners citywide.*
- ***$3M** to hire 50 Urban Park Rangers to connect New Yorkers with the nature that surrounds us, and help ensure our parks remain safe and accessible for all.*
- ***$6M** to restore 80 Parks Enforcement Patrol officers citywide to make sure our parks are safe.*

In addition to parks funding, it is imperative that the city baseline funding for full staffing in critical environmental offices such as the Office of Building Emissions and Energy Performance and the Mayor's Office of Climate Resiliency. These offices must be operating at full capacity to ensure NYC is at the forefront of the fight against climate change.

The COVID-19 crisis is still placing stress on our economy and communities. This was apparent in the FY21 budget but does not need to be the case again this year now that the federal government has provided relief. We urge the Mayor and City Council to have foresight and prepare for the climate crisis by making permanent commitments to environmental investments.

Bold action can be taken by implementing a citywide curbside organics collection program, baselining one percent of the city budget for parks, and doubling down on the Mayor's commitment to electrify all NYC school buses by passing legislation that mandates it.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

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**May 25, 2021**

**Testimony of Amber Khan, Health Justice Director**
**on behalf of New York Lawyers for the Public Interest**
**before the New York City Council**
**Committee on Finance regarding the Executive Budget**

Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today regarding the need to wholly transform how New York City responds to mental health crises. **The City Council must authorize the Mayor's allocation of $112 million for a non-police response to mental health crises.** My name is Amber Khan and I am the Director of the Health Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI).

New York City must ensure that individuals who experience a mental health crisis receive appropriate services which will de-escalate the crisis and ensure their wellbeing and the wellbeing of all other New Yorkers. Only those who are trained in de-escalation practices should respond to a mental health crisis, and the most appropriate individuals to respond are peers (those with lived mental health experience) and health care providers[1]. Police, who are trained to uphold law and order are not suited to deal with individuals experiencing mental health crises, and New York's history of police killing individuals who were experiencing crises is a sad testament to that. In the last five years in New York City alone, police killed 18 individuals when "responding" to their crises.[2] Eliminating the police as mental health crisis responders has been shown not only to save lives, but to result in quicker recovery from crises, greater connections with long-term healthcare services and other community resources, and averting future crises[3].

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[1] Martha Williams Deane, *et al.*, "Emerging Partnerships between Mental Health and Law Enforcement," Psychiatric Services (1999), http://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/abs/10.1176/ps.50.1.99?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori%3Arid%3Acrossref.org&rfr_dat=cr_pub%3Dpubmed&#/doi/abs/10.1176/ps.50.1.99?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori%3Arid%3Acrossref.org&rfr_dat=cr_pub%3Dpubmed.

[2] https://www.nylpi.org/advocates-applaud-mayors-112m-mental-health-crisis-response-allocation-yet-call-for-complete-removal-of-police-and-urge-involvement-of-peers-and-affected-communities/.

[3] Henry J. Steadman, *et al.*, "A Specialized Crisis Response Site as a Core Element of Police-Based Diversion Programs," Psychiatric Services (2001), http://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ps.52.2.219?utm_source=TrendMD&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=Psychiatric_Services_TrendMD_0.

**The City Council must stop the killings and authorize the Mayor's allocation of $112 million for a non-police response to mental health crises. Lives are literally at stake.**

The scores of people experiencing mental health crises who have died at the hands of the police over the years is a microcosm of the police brutality that is being protested around the world today. Disability is disproportionately prevalent in the Black community and other communities of color[4], and individuals who are shot and killed by the police when experiencing mental health crises are disproportionately Black and other people of color.[5] Of the 18 individuals killed by the New York Police Department, 15 – or greater than 80% -- were people of color. Moreover, individuals experiencing mental health crises account for approximately a quarter of all people killed by police nationwide.[6] Even if encounters do not end in death or injury at the hands of police, individuals with mental illness often find themselves forcibly committed or incarcerated, beginning a cycle of readmissions, reincarceration, and homelessness.[7]

The New York City Council simply cannot stand by while the killings continue. Now is the time for major transformations. Now is the time to remove the police as responders to mental health crises.

## New York City Must Move To Institute A Non-Police Response To Mental Health Crises With A Long Track Record of Success

Correct Crisis Intervention Today – NYC (CCIT-NYC), which has over 80 organizational members including NYLPI, has developed the needed antidote. CCIT-NYC's proposal was developed in consultation with affected communities through two 100+ peer focus groups and an ongoing community survey, and modeled on the CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) program in Eugene, Oregon. Of critical note is the fact that CAHOOTS has successfully operated for over 30 years without any major injuries to respondents or responders – let alone deaths. CCIT-NYC's proposal avoids the enormous pitfalls of the City's ThriveNYC pilot proposal, as well as those of the City Council' proposed legislation Int. 2210.

Hallmarks of the CCIT-NYC proposal are:

- **Police removed as responders**;

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[4] Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, "Accessible NYC" (2016), https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/mopd/downloads/pdf/accessiblenyc_2016.pdf.

[5] https://www.nylpi.org/advocates-applaud-mayors-112m-mental-health-crisis-response-allocation-yet-call-for-complete-removal-of-police-and-urge-involvement-of-peers-and-affected-communities/.

[6] Wesley Lowery, Kimberly Kindy, Keith L. Alexander, Julie Tate, Jennifer Jenkins & Steven Rich, *Distraught People, Deadly Results*, Wash. Post (June 30, 2015), https://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/investigative/2015/06/30/distraught-people-deadly-results.

[7] *See* SAMHSA, *supra* note **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, at 8, 27; *Jailing People with Mental Illness*, NAMI, https://www.nami.org/Advocacy/Policy-Priorities/Divert-from-Justice-Involvement/Jailing-People-with-Mental-Illness.

- Calls routed to a **number other than 911;**
- Response teams include **trained peers** and **emergency medical technicians**;
- Response teams employed and dispatched by **culturally competent community organizations**;
- An **oversight board of 51% or more peers from low-income communities of color**; and
- **Response times comparable to those of other emergencies**.

Specifically, police are not the appropriate responders. Not only have they killed, maimed, and traumatized all too many persons with psychiatric disabilities, but, not surprisingly, many persons with psychiatric disabilities and their family members, friends, and health providers fear calling 911 for these same reasons. This, in turn, causes many people to delay reaching out for help until circumstances have escalated to a critical stage.

For the same reasons, a separate 3-digit number must be established for all calls related to mental health concerns. In New York, 911 is run by the police and the critical role of call dispatch must likewise be taken out of the hands of the police. As New York City's Public Advocate recognized, having an alternative to 911 "allows for people experiencing mental health crises or those around them to feel comfortable calling for response to get needed services, while knowing that it won't initiate a full-blown police response that could escalate the situation or criminalize the person in crisis."[8]

A healthcare response to mental health crises is now universally considered the best practice. Most recently, CIT international – a group consisting primarily of police, which created crisis intervention team (CIT) training for police 35 years ago – now argues that a healthcare response is the only appropriate response for a mental health crisis.[9]

Critically, however, the healthcare response must not hew to the no-longer acceptable "medical model," which often focuses narrowly on medication, rather than on supporting a person's ability to recover and live well. Instead, the crucial team members are an extensively trained peer and an emergency medical technician (EMT). Having a peer on the team is essential, as a person who has "been there," can best relate to the fear of an outsider responding in a moment of crisis, and can prove that recovery works. An EMT is needed as many crisis calls may involve physical health issues which are masked by the mental health crisis.

The entities providing the crisis response services must be culturally competent community organizations. As we have heard over and over again during the protests of the last year, service delivery is best achieved by the community, for the community. A community organization not only speaks Johnny's language – literally – but they will actually know Johnny.

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[8] Jumaane D. Williams, "Improving New York City's Responses To Individuals In Mental Health Crisis," Office of the New York City Public Advocate (2019). https://www.pubadvocate.nyc.gov/static/assets/OPA%20EDP%20REPORT%202019.pdf.

[9] CIT International's Guide to Best Practices in Mental Health Crisis Response (August 2019). https://citinternational.org/bestpracticeguide.

As an amalgam of the need to elevate the role of the peer and the role of the community, it is critical that guidance and oversight of an appropriate mental health crisis response system be provided by a majority oversight board of peers and community members.

Finally, it goes without saying that the response times for mental health crisis calls should be comparable to those of other emergencies. Anything shy of this is outright discrimination.

The full text of the CCIT-NYC proposal can be found at http://www.ccitnyc.org/whowe-are/our-proposal/.

Investing in the CCIT-NHYC proposal will also save government resources. By reallocating funds from the police (since police will have, at most, a minimal role in mental health crisis response), the Legislature can ensure that individuals experiencing mental health crises will receive appropriate services to de-escalate the crises and obtain access to mental health care—at no additional cost to taxpayers and vast savings to the public.

NYLPI calculated the following savings just for New York City. The CAHOOTS program budget is about $2.1 million per year, compared to about $90 million for police serving the same jurisdiction.[10] Scaling this figure to New York City's 77 police precincts, the Council should anticipate a budget of roughly $100 million per year to implement CCIT-NYC's proposal citywide.[11] This is equivalent to less than 1% of total annual spending on the NYPD (roughly $11 billion in FY 2020[12]), or approximately 1.8% of the City's allocations for NYPD's operating budget ($5.6 billion in FY 2020[13]).

CCIT-NYC's proposal will also conserve resources both by lessening the burden on inpatient psychiatric facilities, police, and other de-facto first responders, and by reducing spending on claims stemming from police encounters with people experiencing mental health crises.[14] Again, looking at costs in New York City, and based on available statistics from the New York City Comptroller, NYLPI estimates that encounters between police and individuals experiencing mental health crises likely account for a significant portion of the City's over $95 million yearly payments

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[10] *What Is CAHOOTS?*, White Bird Clinic (Oct. 29, 2020), https://whitebirdclinic.org/what-is-cahoots.

[11] 2019 Census data indicates that New York City's population is about 8.419 million people, which is approximately 48.8 times the population of the CAHOOTS service area in Eugene-Springfield, Oregon (172,622 per 2019 Census data). Scaling CCIT-NYC's proposal to all 77 precincts, therefore, will require roughly $102.4 million (8.419 million divided by 172,622 and then multiplied by $2.1 million).

[12] *See Seven Facts About the NYPD Budget*, Citizens Budget Comm'n (June 12, 2020), https://cbcny.org/research/seven-facts-about-nypd-budget.

[13] *See* Council of the City of N.Y., *Report to the Committee on Finance and the Committee on Public Safety on the Fiscal 2021 Executive Budget for the New York Police Department* 1 (2020), https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2020/05/FY21-NYPD-Executive-Report-1.pdf.

[14] *See* SAMHSA, *supra* note **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, at 8 ("With non-existent or inadequate crisis care, costs escalate due to an overdependence on restrictive, longer-term hospital stays, hospital readmissions, overuse of law enforcement and human tragedies that result from a lack of access to care."); Greg B. Smith, *The NYPD's Mental Illness Response Breakdown*, City (Mar. 21, 2019), https://www.thecity.nyc/special-report/2019/3/21/21211184/the-nypd-s-mental-illness-response-breakdown (indicating that most 911 calls involving people with mental illness result in emergency room visits).

for personal injuries due to excessive force, false arrest, and other NYPD misconduct.[15] For instance, in 2019, roughly 21% of all NYPD uses of force and 30% of all Taser discharges involved people experiencing mental health crises.[16] By diverting mental health crisis responses from law enforcement, the City can avoid the monetary costs associated with NYPD misconduct claims attributable to encounters with people experiencing mental health crises, while at the same time protecting the priceless resources of human life and dignity for all New Yorkers.

In short, by reallocating less than 1% of police budgets, the Legislature can save invaluable human lives, conserve significant public resources, and ensure safe and effective crisis care for all New Yorkers experiencing mental health crises.

## New York Should Not Implement An Untested Crisis Response Model Of The Sort Currently Proposed

The City, via ThriveNYC, introduced a pilot program that it contends is responsive to the need to cease the killings at the hands of the police of individuals experiencing mental health crises. Unfortunately, that is highly unlikely to be the case. Among Thrive's grim features are the following:

- An astronomical 30% of all calls will still be directed to the NYPD.
- All calls will continue to go through 911, which is under the NYPD's jurisdiction.
- The entire program will be run by the Fire Department and other City agencies and there is not even any delineation of the lines of authority and communication among the agencies. There is *NO* role whatsoever for community organizations.
- The crisis response teams will be composed of EMTs who are City employees deeply enmeshed in the current police-led response system. Peers do not trust these EMTs. The other team member will be a *licensed clinical* social worker. Requiring both the licensure and the clinical orientation is unnecessary and will preclude a vast array of potential candidates who have excellent skills and a long history of working with people experiencing crises. There is *NO* requirement to hire peers.
- The training of the teams will *NOT* use a trauma-informed framework, be experiential, or use skilled instructors who are peers or even care providers.
- The anticipated response time for crisis calls could be as long as half an hour, which is not even remotely comparable to City response times for other emergencies of eight to ten minutes.
- No outcome/effectiveness metrics have been developed.
- There has been *NO* role for the community in establishing this program or overseeing it.

Similarly, the New York City Council has introduced Int. 2210 which also authorizes extensive police involvement and is likely to continue or even increase the rate of violent police responses. Among the bill's problematic measures are the following:

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[15] *See* Off. of the N.Y.C. Comptroller, *Claims Report: Fiscal Year 2019*, at 10, 13 (2020), https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Claims-Report-FY-2019.pdf.

[16] *See* NYPD, *Use of Force Report 2019*, at 46, 55 (2020), https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nypd/downloads/pdf/use-of-force/use-of-force-2019-2020-11-03.pdf.

- The legislation permits police involvement in a mental health crisis when that crisis also constitutes a "public safety emergency," and that term is broadly defined to include any "crime in progress," irrespective of the severity or dangerousness of the crime, as well as any type of "violence," without respect to the severity or dangerousness of the violence. In addition, an act which is likely to result in harm to some unspecified "the public" is likewise considered a "public safety emergency."
- The entire program will be run by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Health (DOHMH) and there is not even any delineation of the lines of authority and communication among the agencies. There is *NO* role for community organizations.
- While peers are proposed as crisis responders, their role in establishing, running, and assessing the new system is non-existent.
- Although the bill has the stated goal of reducing mental health emergencies via "preventative care," in fact, the crisis response program stands on its own, with no connection whatsoever to a much-needed comprehensive public health system.
- The proposed response time for crisis calls is 30 minutes, which is not even remotely comparable to City response times for other emergencies which averages 8:32 minutes.[17]
- Although the bill contemplates a peer as part of the "mental health emergency response unit," the choice of some undefined "mental health clinician" to complement the peer is inappropriate. Mental health clinicians deliver services in a "medical model" that is typically limited to diagnosis and medication.
- There has been *NO* role for the community in establishing this program or overseeing it.

NYLPI urges the New York City Council to take immediate action to fund non-police responses to mental health crises, to protect the estimated 20 percent of residents who are likely to experience a mental health disorder in any given year.[18]

Thank you for your consideration. I can be reached at (212) 244-4664 or akhan@nylpi.org, and I look forward to the opportunity to discuss how best to eliminate the police as first responders to individuals experiencing mental health crises.

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About New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

For over 40 years, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) has been a leading civil rights advocate for New Yorkers marginalized by race, poverty, disability, and immigration status. Through our community lawyering model, we bridge the gap between traditional civil legal services and civil rights, building strength and capacity for both individual solutions and long-term impact. Our work integrates the power of individual representation, impact litigation, and comprehensive organizing and policy campaigns. Guided by the priorities of our communities, we

[17] NYC Analytic: End-to-End Detail, NYC 911 Reporting (nyc.gov) - https://www1.nyc.gov/site/911reporting/reports/end-to-end-detail.page.

[18] *See* Off. of the Mayor, *Report: Understanding New York City's Mental Health Challenge* 1 (2015), https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/press-releases/2015/thriveNYC_white_paper.pdf ("At least one in five adult New Yorkers is likely to experience a mental health disorder in any given year.").

strive to achieve equality of opportunity and self-determination for people with disabilities, create equal access to health care, ensure immigrant opportunity, strengthen local nonprofits, and secure environmental justice for low-income communities of color.

NYLPI's Disability Justice Program works to advance the civil rights of New Yorkers with disabilities. NYLPI disability advocates have represented thousands of individuals and won campaigns improving the lives of hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. Our landmark victories include integration into the community for people with mental illness, securing the right of those in psychiatric hospitals to the outdoors, establishing the right to mental health discharge planning when leaving institutions, access to medical care and government services, and increased accessibility of New York City's public hospitals. Working together with NYLPI's Health Justice Program, we prioritize the reform of New York's response to individuals experiencing mental health crises, including successful litigation to obtain body-worn camera footage from the NYPD officers who shot and killed individuals experiencing mental health crises.

NYLPI
JUSTICE THROUGH COMMUNITY POWER

# Comments of McGregor Smyth of New York Lawyers for the Public Interest to the New York City Council Committee on Finance on May 28, 2021 regarding the Fiscal Year 2022 proposed budget

After a year of brutal austerity amidst the worst public health and economic crises in generations, New York City has some financial breathing room this year thanks to federal aid and a vaccine-fueled economic recovery. While this is welcome news, we cannot go back to the days of entrenched agency budgets and policies which fail to address the root causes of systemic bias in law enforcement, racial inequality in education, and unequal risks and burdens from climate change and pollution in low-income communities and communities of color.

We urge the City Council and the de Blasio administration to pass a budget that furthers equity and sustainability through long-term commitments to programs and vast improvements to aging infrastructure in a way that directly address the root causes of racial inequality in health care, education, and environmental health, while investing in the sustainable, green jobs our city will need to prepare for a long period of climate crisis and economic transformation.

To this end, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) is pleased to offer the following recommendations:

1. **Fully fund the City Council's Immigrant Health Initiative.** NYLPI is privileged to be part of the City Council's Immigrant Health Initiative, and we thank you for that support. During this unprecedented public health crisis, this funding has allowed us to expand our work and continue to provide critical services to ensure that immigrant New Yorkers have access to healthcare, and we ask that this vital program continue in FY 2022 for both NYLPI and our partners.

2. **Eliminate racial inequities in access to after-school sports.** On average, NYC public school students at predominantly Black and Latinx schools have access to ten fewer sports programs than in schools where students of other races and ethnicities predominate. This glaring inequality – which the Public School Athletic League (PSAL) and Department of Education have known about for years – has meant that over 17,000 Black and Latinx students are not able to play the sport of their choice. The budget must include adequate funding ($6 million this year and approximately $19 million over three years) for the PSAL to create enough new sports teams and programs to ensure that every student has access to at least six different after school sports. Further, the Council and City Hall should stipulate that all PSAL funding be distributed equitably.

3. **Invest in zero-emissions transportation systems, including electric school buses for NYC's children.** We are encouraged by the inclusion of funding for electric school bus purchases for NYCSBUS – the City's newly municipalized fleet of school buses – in the proposed budget. We urge this Council and this administration to pass legislation such as Intro 455 of 2018 that will create a mandatory timeline to transition the entire fleet of 10,000 school buses from dirty diesel and gasoline to zero-emissions

electric engines as rapidly as possible. We further call for the first tranches of electric buses to be deployed on routes serving students with disabilities who spend disproportionate amounts of time on school buses, and in environmental justice communities bearing the disproportionate, cumulative impacts of air pollution.

4. **Commit to Zero Waste by 2030 with investments in organics recycling, commercial waste reform programs, and infrastructure that advance waste equity and creation of good green jobs.** We are pleased to see full funding for implementation of the landmark Commercial Waste Zones program in the proposed budget. While the restoration of funding for limited curbside compost collection and community drop-off sites are a positive signal, we urge the Council and administration to mandate a timeline and plan for implementation of a universal, citywide compost program to ensure that this program achieves economies of scale, achieves robust participation in multifamily buildings, and eventually replace garbage disposal routes to achieve savings and advance our waste reduction goals. We also urge the City to make long-term commitments to and investments in local organic waste processing facilities which operate on small parcels of parkland and other public property

5. **Adopt the mayor's proposed budget for mental health while ensuring that this funding creates a city-wide mental health crisis response system**. As referenced in NYLPI's oral testimony before the Committee on Finance, we strongly urge the City to adopt the goal of wholly eliminating police as responders. We support a crisis response system that is entirely free of police involvement, uses an alternate three-digit phone number in lieu of 911; is driven by peers (those with lived mental health experience); is community-based and culturally competent; and has response times comparable to other emergencies. Now is the time for major transformations.

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s characterization of budgets as moral documents rings true every spring when our government debates and negotiates funding and investment priorities. As we tentatively emerge from a year of profound loss and fear for so many New Yorkers, it is imperative that we set a course to correct the structural inequality, unsustainable infrastructure, and often unfair economic systems that have contributed to the public health and social crises of the past year. We look forward to continuing to work with the Council and the administration to implement these and many other initiatives and help ensure their success.

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*New York Lawyers for the Public Interest has fought for more than 40 years to protect civil rights and achieve lived equality for communities in need. NYLPI combines the power of law, organizing, and the private bar to make lasting change where it's needed most.*

NYPIRG NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP

**TESTIMONY OF**
**THE NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP (NYPIRG)**
**BEFORE THE**
**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**
**REGARDING**
**FISCAL YEAR 2022 EXECUTIVE BUDGET**
**May 25, 2021**
**New York City, NY**

Good afternoon, my name is Ramandeep Kaur, I'm a Policy Associate with the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), and a student at CUNY's City College of New York. NYPIRG is a non-partisan, not-for-profit, research and advocacy organization. Consumer protection, environmental preservation, higher education, mass transit, and civic empowerment are our principal areas of concern. Today, I am going to be speaking about the Mayor's Executive Budget as it impacts CUNY and college students.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**New York City Must Do Its Part to Envision A New Deal For CUNY**

COVID-19 has had major impacts on students and higher education institutions. In the immediate, schools closed, and classes and student activities abruptly moved to virtual formats. Too many students were left with insecure housing, access to food, and access to the internet. Students lost their jobs and many had to make tough decisions on whether or not to face risk of infection to access critical school services that could not be done online. Many students have found the transition particularly taxing to their mental health. As students struggle with a digital learning environment, many report issues with focus and depression.

Despite these challenges, a college-educated workforce is key for supporting a just recovery for individuals and nurturing an economy strained by COVID-19. College-educated workers earn more than their high-school educated peers – by an average of $30,000 per year, as found by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. As wages increase, so do tax revenues which support any number of public services. The average bachelor's degree holder contributes $278,000 more to local economies than the average high school graduate through direct spending over the course of their lifetime; and an associate degree holder contributes $81,000 more than a high school graduate.

CUNY is a lifeline for working class New Yorkers and people of color; but unfortunately Mayor de Blasio's Executive Budget includes a $67 million cut to CUNY's community colleges,

eliminates funding for vital mental health and academic counselors, and cuts programs that help students graduate and thrive, such as campus childcare, and remediation programs.

We are glad to hear that CUNY ASAP funding, which was originally cut by $10 million in the Executive Budget, is being restored. As we heard from NYPIRG member and ASAP student at QCC, Nathan Lloyd, ASAP has played a crucial role in his success at QCC. Through providing one-on-one advisement, specialized workshops, tuition assistance, and covering MetroCard and textbook costs, ASAP has helped him stay on track – he's graduating from QCC next month.

The New Deal for CUNY is about broadening that paradigm for all students. All students should have access to regular advisement -- which means a lower student-to-advisor ratio. All students should have access to smaller classes, and getting the classes they need to graduate -- which means a lower student-to-teacher ratio. All students should have access to support services like professional workshops and help with textbooks.

Additionally, all students who need it should have access to responsive mental health counseling. NYPIRG has heard from students about the difficulties they are facing due to the pandemic, whether it be struggling to complete tasks or needing grief counseling. We have also heard from many students that their primary means of seeking mental health treatment is at their college campus, where they are accustomed to seeking out other resources. Even before the pandemic began, between 2009 and 2015, visits to campus mental health centers climbed by 30%. Nationally, roughly 11% of students utilize their campus counseling center.

***We urge the City Council to enact a final budget which provides $20.4 million in new investment to help the University begin to meet the minimum ratios of mental health counselors, academic advisors and full-time faculty to students that are required in the New Deal for CUNY.***

**Support Community Colleges**

Community colleges support more open access to postsecondary education, enroll more students of color and low income students, and contribute to the development of an educated citizenry and skilled workforce. However, here in New York, the state relies too heavily on students' tuition dollars to fund its community colleges.

To its credit, the City has stepped up in previous years to hold the line on community college tuition, and the state's most recently enacted budget takes some steps to stabilize CUNY and SUNY community college funding. Still, New York still charges one the of the highest public community college average tuition and fees in the nation. The College Board annually publishes a national ranking of states' average tuition and fees. New York State ranks seventh most expensive in the nation for the 2020-2021 academic year. The rate of tuition hikes at NY community colleges over the past decade far outstrip inflation, while states support for community colleges has

stagnated. More on NYPIRG's analysis of New York's community college costs can be found here: www.nypirgstudents.org/pubs/202102/Policy_Close_Up_higher_ed_2.3.21.pdf.

***We urge the City Council to enact a final budget which commits an additional $40 million to hold community college budgets harmless from the tuition losses from pandemic-related enrollment dips, as requested by the CUNY administration.***

**Fully Fund City Council-Supported Initiatives**

Textbooks, food, rent, child care and other costs can price students out of an education before they even fill out their FAFSA. With private daycare center costs averaging between $15,000 and $20,000 a year, and few publicly-funded options available, student – or prospective student – parents can be left in the lurch. Currently, according to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, nearly 70% of college students work nationwide. In a recent report put out by the CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, of students that work, 79 percent reported that they work to pay for living expenses and over a third of those who work believe that having a job negatively impacts their academic performance.

The pandemic has also driven the hunger crisis in NY to new levels. The number of food-insecure New York City residents has doubled since the onset of the pandemic, from 1.2 million to nearly 2.2 million, roughly 25% of the population. Nearly 40% of Black families in NYC are struggling with food insecurity. Food insecurity is also a problem that reaches our campuses. Over 57% of CUNY students reported that their ability to do school work decreased due to the coronavirus pandemic (due to emotional/mental states, increased family responsibilities, and/or changes to online learning). The level of worry CUNY students have about running out of food because of lack of money was more than three times higher in 2020 than in 2018 and 54% of CUNY students reported a decrease in their own income due to COVID-19. Students who reported having gone hungry often, are twice as likely to have failed out of a degree program as students who had not experienced hunger.

***We urge the City Council to enact a final budget which fully funds City Council-supported initiatives including campus childcare centers, the Merit Scholarship Program, and the Council's CUNY Food Insecurity Pilot Program which should be brought back to serve more students.***

The New York City Council can help deliver on the promise of the New Deal for CUNY by ensuring that all cuts in the Executive Budget are restored, Council-supported programs are fully funded, and by committing to a final budget which increases funding for CUNY by $60 million.

Thank you.

**NY City Council Committee of Finance - FY22 Budget Hearing**

**TESTIMONY from Lynn Kelly, Executive Director, New York Restoration Project**

**May 25, 2021**

To the members of City Council and Chairman Dromm, thank you for the leadership and support you give to our city, and thank you for this opportunity to testify.

My name is Lynn Kelly and I am the Executive Director of New York Restoration Project (NYRP). I founded the Play Fair Coalition in 2019 and am a proud supporter of this effort.

For 25 years, NYRP has helped build and maintain the city's green infrastructure, improving access to open space in our city's most under-resourced neighborhoods promoting food security through urban agriculture, and supporting healthy communities. We oversee 80 acres of City parkland, operate 52 community gardens, and provide 20,000 square feet of food production space throughout the five boroughs. Just this past year, our spaces allowed gardeners to grow $180,000 worth of produce that was distributed to families in need at no cost.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated deep environmental and social injustices in our city; low-income communities suffering the most from lack of access to quality green space were also hit hardest by the pandemic, both in terms of health and economic outcomes. NYRP acted on these issues because the lack of municipal investment stunted many of New York's underserved neighborhoods. Unfortunately, the proposed FY22 budget continues to under value the critical role of green space in New Yorkers' lives.

I ask you, why does the Administration chronically underfund an agency that is responsible for an asset they credit as being vital to the health and well-being of New Yorkers?

2020 parks conditions were the worst on record since NYC Parks began recording them in 2004. There are simply not nearly enough City Park Workers, Gardeners, Urban Park Rangers, or PEP officers to cover 14% of the City's land and it is grossly unfair to assume that volunteers will make up the lack of funded staff.

Research has shown that communities with access to high quality green space benefit from improved physical and mental health and economic conditions compared to those lacking green space. Open spaces are essential for public health, climate change resilience, and economic development, and our city's recovery from the pandemic. We must invest in these spaces to recover from the pandemic and secure an equitable future for our city

This proposed allocation risks continuing the hardships faced by many communities. But that can change. With greater investment in NYC parks, organizations such as NYRP can work together with the city to secure and flourish the city's green spaces.

Please PLAY FAIR for NYC Parks. Thank you.

**TESTIMONY OF THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS**
**BY MICHAEL MULGREW**
**PRESIDENT**

**BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL**
**COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

**REGARDING THE FISCAL YEAR 22 EXECUTIVE BUDGET**

**MAY 25, 2020**

My name is Michael Mulgrew and I serve as the president of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). On behalf of the union's more than 190,000 members, I would like to thank Chair Daniel Dromm and all the members of the New York City Council's Committee on Finance for holding today's hearing and accepting public testimony on the executive budget for fiscal year 2022. I would also like to thank Speaker Corey Johnson, Education Committee Chair Mark Treyger and Capital Budget Subcommittee Chair Helen Rosenthal for their leadership during this year's budget process.

We should be proud of the work we did this year advocating for the needs of our students. Working together, we managed to secure an unprecedented level of investment from our state and federal governments for our public schools. But we must be careful how we direct these new funds if we want to ensure everlasting impact as we address the learning loss and trauma our students have suffered during the pandemic.

**The five-point plan our students need**

As I've previously shared with you, we created a five-point plan that includes what our students need to recover from the pandemic. Our plan calls for: (1) mental health and academic intervention teams in all public schools, (2) a pilot program to lower class size in 100 of the city's

neediest schools that we will use as a template for the rest of the city[1], (3) extended summer learning programs, (4) targeted help for current high school students, and (5) UFT training programs for teachers.

While we have made progress with points three, four and five by rolling up our sleeves, we need your help in fighting for interventions teams in every school and smaller class sizes in our neediest schools.

*Mental health/academic intervention teams*

We are excited to see that all public schools will be funded at 100% fair student funding this upcoming school year, a tremendous feat many years in the making. We would like to thank the City Council for including in your response to the Mayor's budget a $125 million proposal to extend access to social and emotional supports.

We are, however, concerned with the administration's proposal to provide academic support by investing $500 million to evaluate every student's needs through assessments and to provide targeted tutoring. This is a significantly large investment that we are not confident will produce the results we need.

Instead, we recommend that teams of academic intervention specialists and social workers/psychologists be created for each of the 1,800 city public schools. The teams would work directly with students suffering academic losses and psychological effects from the pandemic.

The initiative would include pull-out programs for children needing additional instruction, professional collaboration with teachers on instruction and coping strategies, and individual and group therapy for students.

To provide services of the necessary depth, the average New York City public school would need three to four teams, a total of six to eight professionals, or roughly one team for every 200 students. Larger schools would need more personnel. The teams would include guidance counselors and/or social workers and academic intervention specialists.

[1] See attachment for the list of 100 neediest public schools by title 1 funding.

*Smaller classes*

It's disappointing that the administration makes no mention of lowering class size in the executive budget. However, we appreciate the City Council's inclusion in its response to the preliminary budget of a $250 million proposal to hire an additional 2,500 teachers to lower class size in schools with academically struggling students and those with vulnerable student populations.

This proposal is well aligned with the second part of our five-point plan to target 100 of our neediest schools. Current New York City class sizes — limited by the UFT contract to 18 students in pre-K to 34 students in academic high school subject classes— are among the highest in the metropolitan area, and class-size reduction is an important goal for many parents.

Because many experts on the subject believe class-size reduction is most effective when dramatic rather than piecemeal, the program would reduce class size in the affected schools by one-third: Pre-K classes would be capped at 12, classes that currently have 25 students would be reduced to 17, classes with 30 students would see a drop to 20, and 34-student classes would be reduced to 23.

To expand equitably would require updated and accurate space assessments for each school building and an aggressive space acquisition program by the city. The existing surplus of office rental space is an unprecedented opportunity. The administration, the School Construction Authority (SCA) and the city Department of Education (DOE) would need to coordinate acquisition in a way they have not done before. We think a good place to start would be to review the Planning to Learn – The School Building Challenge, a report published by this legislative body in March 2018.

*Extended summer learning programs*

As mentioned earlier, we are pleased to share with you that we have made progress with the remaining three tenets of our five-point plan.

We appreciate that the administration and the City Council agree with us that we must extend summer learning programs for students. We expect the number of students needing summer instruction to surpass the 188,000 who enrolled in the 2020 summer programs.

We will continue to push the DOE to make sure we provide as much in-person, rather than remote, instruction as possible and that all current COVID-19 safety and testing protocols remain in place for any in-person summer programs.

*Targeted help for current high school students*

For our high school students, we are working in partnership with the DOE on a program that offers one hour of free college and career counseling to high school juniors and seniors. The program allows students to meet via video chat with UFT members who are experienced college and career counselors.

Appointments are available on Monday through Friday, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., and on Saturday and Sunday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The counseling includes technical assistance with post-secondary applications and financial aid. High school seniors may also be connected with case managers at the City University of New York and the State University of New York who can provide tutoring, academic help, and more planning support.

*UFT training programs for teachers*

I am pleased to announce that we are already doing our part to train teachers. This spring, the UFT Teacher Center working with the United Community Schools (UCS) and the Positive Learning Collaborative (PLC), launched a professional learning program designed to help teachers assess and respond to their own stress and their students' stress. To this date, we have trained approximately 4,000 educators citywide.

The workshops are designed to help teachers make connections between trauma, stress, self-awareness, classroom environment and student behavior, and recommend classroom practices to deal with students' stress and to identify students in need of additional support. The program — developed using the union's own funds — includes live lectures and demonstrations and post-training support groups that teachers can attend.

**UFT programs deliver**

In addition to working together to offer New York City teachers professional learning workshops, the UFT Teacher Center, the United Community Schools and the Positive Learning collaborative continue to sustain their programming across their school sites. Additionally, our Dial-a-Teacher homework helpline and BRAVE anti-bullying hotline continue to serve students citywide.

*UFT Teacher Center*

This year we are asking the City Council to support our UFT Teacher Center with a $9 million grant. In the coming year, the UFT Teacher Center would use the funding across its 115 school sites to provide high-quality professional learning opportunities in three urgently needed areas: 1) to ensure that educators are prepared to help all students with learning loss to complete unfinished learning from the past two school years, 2) to ensure that educators are prepared to provide the social and emotional supports their students need to address the trauma they have experienced in these unprecedented times, and 3) to support educators in aligning past and future blended and remote instruction with the return of in-person learning.

Thank you for your consideration of additional capital funding to ensure we have a Teacher Center in every community school district and to support site-specific projects.

*United Community Schools*

We are encouraged to see that funding to expand the number of community schools across the city is a priority in this year's budget. We are particularly impressed with the City Council's proposal to make every school in New York City a community school.

As you know, the UFT has been at the forefront of the community schools movement, with 31 schools in New York City serving as United Community Schools. Since the start of the pandemic UCS sites have fed 6,000 families and have conducted 1,500 virtual counseling and wellness check-ins with students and caregivers.

We are respectfully requesting $5 million for UCS to sustain 31 community schools by providing mental health services, academic supports, community school technical assistance and trainings and professional development for teachers and staff to UCS public schools. This allocation also would directly support program coordination and services for select schools, administrative salaries, mental health staff salaries, professional development, and supplies and equipment.

We would also like to thank you for your consideration of our capital project requests.

*Positive Learning Collaborative*

We are also encouraged to see the prioritization of funding to implement and expand restorative justice practices in city schools. We applaud the City Council's proposal to provide a school-based restorative justice coordinator at 320 high-need schools.

As you well know, for nearly a decade, the Positive Learning Collaborative has been using restorative practices to significantly decrease suspensions and major incidents while increasing academic performance and satisfaction in New York City classrooms. Programming in our 25 PLC schools has led to a 46% reduction in suspensions, a 40% decrease in major incidents, a 53% improvement in school culture, and three times more gains in English Language Arts scores than in the average city school.

Since going virtual, PLC has been able to expand its reach beyond the 25 PLC schools by offering many of its workshops to school communities in neighboring areas. For the upcoming school year, PLC will be managing a new Sensory Tools for Schools project with participating schools receiving grade-level designed kits that promote physical activities or supports that can be calming or increase alertness in order to support students in getting to a "just right" state for being in school, safe and learning-ready.

Supporting schools to heal and develop positive and equitable systems that support all students has always been at the center of our work. With your help, we know we can make an even greater impact during this time of great need. We ask you to support PLC with $2 million this year.

*Dial-A-teacher homework helpline*

Dial-A-Teacher continues to operate on Monday through Thursday, 4:00 to 7:00 p.m., in nine languages, including Spanish, Mandarin and Bengali. Last year, the program received more than 40,000 calls. If Dial-A-Teacher's operating technology were upgraded, the program could help even more students in the virtual education arena where so many of our students are now learning.

Dial-A-Teacher is respectfully requesting $170,160. The funds would be used to: 1) further develop an online presence to include creation of an electronic application that meets the technology students are using today, 2) procure digital curriculum for multiple subject areas — curriculum the DOE has identified that aligns with the new standards, 3) perform technology maintenance and upgrades for effective functionality of the program via a hybrid remote/physical presence model, and 4) promote the program in the communities we serve.

*BRAVE anti-bullying hotline*

Bullying in schools and in our society is a tragic phenomenon. In New York State, legislation called the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) was passed in 2010. Its goal is to ensure that public

elementary and secondary school students have a safe and supportive environment, free from discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment and bullying on school property, on school buses and at school functions.

To help combat bullying in schools, we entered into an agreement with the Mental Health Association of New York City, now known as VIBRANT, on Oct. 3, 2011 to launch the BRAVE anti-bullying hotline. We want to first thank the City Council for the funding over the years to keep BRAVE accessible to all students. We respectfully ask you to support this program with $281,000 for this fiscal year so we can continue to provide the services that are a lifeline for our students and to be a reliable place our educators can turn to for resources.

**Support citywide programs**

I would also like to take the time to advocate for two citywide programs that are vital for our students and educators. We need to restore Teacher's Choice, and support Broadway Bridges.

*Teacher's Choice*

The Teacher's Choice program is crucial to our educators. It's a key initiative to ensure our teachers are reimbursed for the school supplies and materials they purchase for their classrooms and for many of their students in need. After baselining the program for three years in the fiscal year 2020 adopted budget, the program was completely cut in the fiscal year 2021 adopted budget. Even during this time of remote learning, teachers need to purchase school supplies to continue to support students in need and to enhance their classroom experience regardless of whether it is in-person or virtual. We are glad to see that the executive budget seeks to restore funding for Teacher's Choice to the 2019-2020 level of $20 million and urge you to make sure it's included in the final enacted budget and we baseline it once again.

*Broadway Bridges*

Broadway Bridges aims to ensure that every student in a New York City public high school has the opportunity to see a Broadway show before graduation. Through Broadway Bridges, The Broadway League subsidizes $20 tickets to weekday matinee and evening performances by paying half of the ticket price as well as the $3.00-$3.50 in fees associated with each ticket purchase. This enables The Broadway League to offer schools $10 tickets.

The initiative improves the arts experience of students who have not otherwise had the opportunity to attend live theater, and it enhances the experience of students who are already

engaged with the performing arts through their schools. We ask that you support this important initiative in the fiscal year 2022 City Council budget.

**School nurse in every school**

Before I conclude, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the City Council's proposal to ensure that we have a nurse available in every school building. We applaud you for this. It is highly problematic that the executive budget does not guarantee this funding. We learned this lesson during the ongoing pandemic and we simply cannot continue to ignore issue. We urge you to continue to fight for this initiative.

**Closing Thoughts**

In closing, thank you for your time and consideration. We are making progress toward a full in-person reopening for our students in the fall, but we cannot emphasize how important it is that we do it with mental health and academic intervention teams in every school and smaller class sizes, particularly in schools serving our neediest students. Without this crucial infrastructure in place, we will have a difficult time helping our students recover as we address learning loss and trauma. It is imperative that we get this right for our students and build back a better and stronger school system.

Thank you.

###

# 100 Neediest Title I Schools (Citywide)

| | School Code | School Name | School Type | Free Lunch Poverty % | FY21 Audited Register |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 02M427 | Manhattan Academy for Arts & Language | High school | 99.5% | 207 |
| 2 | 09X042 | P.S. 042 Claremont | Elementary | 99.4% | 339 |
| 3 | 17K352 | Ebbets Field Middle School | Middle | 99.2% | 123 |
| 4 | 07X334 | International Community High School | High school | 99.0% | 401 |
| 5 | 09X361 | The Highbridge Green School | Middle | 98.9% | 380 |
| 6 | 07X224 | P.S./I.S. 224 | Middle | 98.6% | 281 |
| 7 | 04M155 | P.S. 155 William Paca | Elementary | 98.6% | 207 |
| 8 | 09X365 | Academy for Language and Technology | High school | 98.5% | 330 |
| 9 | 13K067 | P.S. 067 Charles A. Dorsey | Elementary | 98.5% | 204 |
| 10 | 10X244 | The New School for Leadership and Journalism | Middle | 98.3% | 717 |
| 11 | 07X018 | P.S. 018 John Peter Zenger | Elementary | 98.1% | 521 |
| 12 | 09X110 | P.S. 110 Theodore Schoenfeld | Elementary | 98.1% | 370 |
| 13 | 23K150 | P.S. 150 Christopher | Elementary | 98.1% | 158 |
| 14 | 08X375 | The Bronx Mathematics Preparatory School | Middle | 98.0% | 202 |
| 15 | 12X044 | P.S. 044 David C. Farragut | Elementary | 98.0% | 247 |
| 16 | 05M092 | P.S. 092 Mary McLeod Bethune | Elementary | 97.8% | 226 |

| | School Code | School Name | School Type | Free Lunch Poverty % | FY21 Audited Register |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17 | 06M349 | Harbor Heights | Middle | 97.6% | 123 |
| 18 | 10X291 | P.S. 291 | Elementary | 97.6% | 575 |
| 19 | 09X163 | P.S. 163 Arthur A. Schomburg | Elementary | 97.6% | 410 |
| 20 | 23K298 | P.S. 298 Dr. Betty Shabazz | Elementary | 97.5% | 242 |
| 21 | 23K668 | Riverdale Avenue Middle School | Middle | 97.2% | 142 |
| 22 | 12X006 | P.S. 006 West Farms | Elementary | 97.2% | 471 |
| 23 | 31R016 | P.S. 016 John J. Driscoll | Elementary | 97.2% | 393 |
| 24 | 07X154 | P.S. 154 Jonathan D. Hyatt | Elementary | 97.2% | 281 |
| 25 | 15K676 | Red Hook Neighborhood School | Elementary | 97.1% | 104 |
| 26 | 10X059 | P.S. 059 The Community School of Technology | Elementary | 97.0% | 469 |
| 27 | 05M194 | P.S. 194 Countee Cullen | Elementary | 97.0% | 167 |
| 28 | 23K284 | The Gregory Jocko Jackson School of Sports, Art, and Technology | Elementary | 96.9% | 228 |
| 29 | 01M034 | P.S. 034 Franklin D. Roosevelt | K-8 | 96.8% | 279 |
| 30 | 19K328 | P.S. 328 Phyllis Wheatley | Elementary | 96.8% | 249 |
| 31 | 15K094 | P.S. 094 The Henry Longfellow | Elementary | 96.7% | 1,216 |
| 32 | 04M182 | The Bilingual Bicultural School | Elementary | 96.7% | 270 |
| 33 | 05M133 | P.S. 133 Fred R Moore | Elementary | 96.6% | 178 |
| 34 | 09X055 | P.S. 055 Benjamin Franklin | Elementary | 96.5% | 509 |

| | School Code | School Name | School Type | Free Lunch Poverty % | FY21 Audited Register |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 35 | 04M146 | P.S. 146 Ann M. Short | Elementary | 96.5% | 310 |
| 36 | 08X107 | P.S. 107 | Elementary | 96.4% | 527 |
| 37 | 12X463 | Urban Scholars Community School | Elementary | 96.4% | 265 |
| 38 | 09X311 | Lucero Elementary School | Elementary | 96.4% | 359 |
| 39 | 07X065 | P.S. 065 Mother Hale Academy | Elementary | 96.4% | 332 |
| 40 | 07X369 | Young Leaders Elementary School | Elementary | 96.4% | 194 |
| 41 | 09X274 | The New American Academy at Roberto Clemente State Park | Elementary | 96.3% | 569 |
| 42 | 09X058 | P.S. 058 | Elementary | 96.2% | 343 |
| 43 | 06M423 | High School for Excellence and Innovation | High school | 96.2% | 184 |
| 44 | 08X062 | P.S. 062 Inocensio Casanova | Elementary | 96.1% | 564 |
| 45 | 09X232 | I.S. 232 | Middle | 96.0% | 455 |
| 46 | 10X032 | P.S. 032 Belmont | Elementary | 96.0% | 692 |
| 47 | 03M149 | P.S. 149 Sojourner Truth | K-8 | 96.0% | 202 |
| 48 | 09X303 | I.S. X303 Leadership & Community Service | Middle | 95.9% | 315 |
| 49 | 09X199 | P.S. 199X - The Shakespeare School | Elementary | 95.9% | 613 |
| 50 | 21K329 | P.S. 329 Surfside | Elementary | 95.9% | 339 |
| 51 | 12X341 | Accion Academy | Middle | 95.8% | 384 |
| 52 | 08X140 | P.S. X140 The Eagle School | Elementary | 95.8% | 506 |

| | School Code | School Name | School Type | Free Lunch Poverty % | FY21 Audited Register |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 53 | 23K401 | Christopher Avenue Community School | Elementary | 95.8% | 237 |
| 54 | 06M468 | High School for Health Careers and Sciences | High school | 95.7% | 392 |
| 55 | 03M076 | P.S. 076 A. Philip Randolph | K-8 | 95.7% | 345 |
| 56 | 09X063 | P.S. 063 Author's Academy | Elementary | 95.6% | 455 |
| 57 | 06M008 | P.S. 008 Luis Belliard | Elementary | 95.6% | 429 |
| 58 | 07X043 | P.S. 043 Jonas Bronck | Elementary | 95.6% | 318 |
| 59 | 10X386 | School for Environmental Citizenship | Elementary | 95.5% | 508 |
| 60 | 10X268 | Kingsbridge International High School | High school | 95.5% | 424 |
| 61 | 09X219 | I.S. 219 New Venture School | Middle | 95.4% | 325 |
| 62 | 06M115 | P.S. 115 Alexander Humboldt | Elementary | 95.4% | 417 |
| 63 | 04M038 | P.S. 38 Roberto Clemente | Elementary | 95.4% | 194 |
| 64 | 07X151 | J.H.S. 151 Lou Gehrig | Middle | 95.2% | 189 |
| 65 | 05M123 | P.S. 123 Mahalia Jackson | K-8 | 95.2% | 398 |
| 66 | 23K041 | P.S. 041 Francis White | K-8 | 95.2% | 332 |
| 67 | 07X584 | I.S. 584 | Middle | 95.1% | 247 |
| 68 | 12X318 | I.S. X318 Math, Science & Technology Through Arts | Middle | 95.1% | 225 |
| 69 | 17K399 | P.S. 399 Stanley Eugene Clark | Elementary | 95.1% | 284 |
| 70 | 08X333 | The Longwood Academy of Discovery | Elementary | 95.0% | 536 |

| | School Code | School Name | School Type | Free Lunch Poverty % | FY21 Audited Register |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 71 | 07X001 | P.S. 001 Courtlandt School | Elementary | 95.0% | 524 |
| 72 | 12X061 | P.S. 061 Francisco Oller | Elementary | 95.0% | 242 |
| 73 | 19K213 | P.S. 213 New Lots | Elementary | 95.0% | 202 |
| 74 | 05M030 | P.S. 030 Hernandez/Hughes | Elementary | 95.0% | 200 |
| 75 | 10X447 | Creston Academy | Middle | 94.9% | 455 |
| 76 | 09X457 | Sheridan Academy for Young Leaders | Elementary | 94.9% | 471 |
| 77 | 09X004 | P.S./M.S. 004 Crotona Park West | K-8 | 94.9% | 433 |
| 78 | 32K556 | Bushwick Leaders High School for Academic Excellence | High school | 94.9% | 332 |
| 79 | 23K327 | P.S. 327 Dr. Rose B. English | Elementary | 94.9% | 216 |
| 80 | 05M154 | P.S. 154 Harriet Tubman | Elementary | 94.9% | 217 |
| 81 | 03M241 | STEM Institute of Manhattan | Elementary | 94.8% | 97 |
| 82 | 09X070 | P.S. 070 Max Schoenfeld | Elementary | 94.7% | 998 |
| 83 | 09X028 | P.S. 028 Mount Hope | Elementary | 94.6% | 649 |
| 84 | 07X005 | P.S. 5 Port Morris | K-8 | 94.6% | 630 |
| 85 | 31R078 | P.S. 78 | Elementary | 94.6% | 680 |
| 86 | 10X342 | International School for Liberal Arts | econdary Scho | 94.6% | 503 |
| 87 | 24Q311 | Corona Arts & Sciences Academy | Middle | 94.5% | 762 |
| 88 | 09X114 | P.S. X114 - Luis Llorens Torres Schools | Elementary | 94.5% | 616 |

| | School Code | School Name | School Type | Free Lunch Poverty % | FY21 Audited Register |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 89 | 10X054 | P.S./I.S. 54 | Elementary | 94.5% | 400 |
| 90 | 07X161 | P.S. 161 Juan Ponce De Leon School | Elementary | 94.5% | 363 |
| 91 | 13K093 | P.S. 093 William H. Prescott | Elementary | 94.5% | 165 |
| 92 | 08X301 | M.S. 301 Paul L. Dunbar | Middle | 94.4% | 195 |
| 93 | 17K398 | P.S. 398 Walter Weaver | Elementary | 94.4% | 232 |
| 94 | 30Q111 | P.S. 111 Jacob Blackwell | K-8 | 94.4% | 303 |
| 95 | 04M375 | Mosaic Preparatory Academy | Elementary | 94.4% | 213 |
| 96 | 09X236 | P.S. 236 Langston Hughes | Elementary | 94.3% | 283 |
| 97 | 12X047 | P.S. 047 John Randolph | Elementary | 94.2% | 1,019 |
| 98 | 19K678 | East New York Middle School of Excellence | Middle | 94.2% | 260 |
| 99 | 15K130 | P.S. 130 The Parkside | Elementary | 94.2% | 803 |
| 100 | 05M046 | P.S. 046 Arthur Tappan | K-8 | 94.2% | 513 |

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Testimony to New York City Council
Re: FY22 Budget
Tuesday, May 25, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony. My name is Lisa Gold and I am the Executive Director of the Asian American Arts Alliance (A4). We are a 37-year old service organization representing a diverse coalition of artists, arts organizations, and arts supporters. We are dedicated to ensuring greater representation, equity, and opportunities for Asian American artists and arts organizations, as well as providing a critical voice for this community.

A4 has been extremely fortunate to have received funding the through the City Council and the Department of Cultural Affairs, but that support has been inconsistent and unreliable as an ongoing and material source of institutional support. We are greatly concerned about any cuts proposed to the cultural budget that will disproportionately effect people of color and artists, especially the Asian American community which has suffered an astronomical increase in hate and bias crimes on top of health and economic losses.

It was already the case that city funding was disproportionately under-allocated to Asian American-led and serving cultural organizations. In every DCLA annual budget since I've been working at A4, the percent of discretionary funding allocated to Asian-led and -serving organizations has been well under 5%. Combined with the complete absence of an Asian-led CIG, the total cultural funding to the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community is drastically less than the 15% of the New York City population we comprise. And the funding history to AAPI-led and-serving social service organizations is just as discriminatory.

Continued…

The philanthropic sector isn't making up the difference. A recent report released by the Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP)[1] showed that while the U.S. AAPI population has more than doubled in size, foundation funding for AAPI communities flatlined, even when overall philanthropic giving was rising. For every $100 awarded by foundations for work in the U.S., only 20 cents is designated for AAPI communities!

The arts sector—which makes New York so great—has suffered so much this past year. And the Asian American creative community has been hit especially hard. Not only have our artists lost income, they have faced fear, isolation, and physical violence due to political and racial attacks. Many are concerned about ongoing effects of racism and bias in their ability to find work.

A 2020 study[2] conducted by Americans for the Arts of more than 10,000 working artists and creatives finds that 95% of creative workers have experienced income loss and nearly two-thirds of artists report having become unemployed since the start of the pandemic.

It is critical that the city support the arts and make an investment in BPIOC led and serving organizations. REPRESENTATION MATTERS. When people see Asian superheroes or musicians or dancers or designers, we become a regular part of popular culture and are accepted as the Americans we are, instead of perpetual foreigners.

Creative workers are just as vital to the recovery and the economy of New York City as those in the financial, real estate, and manufacturing industries. I implore you to ensure equity and fairness in the FY22 budget to ensure that creative workers and Asian American-led and serving organizations receive their fair share of city support. Without culture and art, there is no recovery.

Thank you.

Lisa Gold
Executive Director
Asian American Arts Alliance

1) Seeking to Soar: Foundation Funding for Asian American & Pacific Islander Communities 2009-2018: March 2021
Asian American/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP)
https://aapip.org/sites/default/files/page/files/seeking_to_soar_foundation_funding_for_aapi_communities_1.pdf

2) COVID-19's Impact on The Arts Research Update: May 18, 2020
Americans for the Arts
https://www.americansforthearts.org/news-room/americans-for-the-arts-news/covid-19%E2%80%99s-impact-on-the-arts-research-tracking-update-may-18-2020

Asian American Federation

# Testimony for New York City Council
# Budget Hearings on
# The Fiscal Year 2020 Executive Budget

## Committee on Finance

*May 25, 2021*

Written Testimony

Thank you for giving the Asian American Federation the opportunity to testify this afternoon. I am Ravi Reddi, the Associate Director of Advocacy and Policy at AAF.

Over the past several months, we have met with many of you on this Committee. It wasn't for a traditional budget advocacy conversation. Because although our community-based organizations continue to lead by example in getting culturally-competent services to our most vulnerable, the context is dramatically different.

There have been 6,603 reports of anti-Asian incidents from March 2020 to March 2021, nationally. And the tragedy within this tragedy is that 1,500 of them, more than a fifth, have occurred in our City, to say nothing of the continuing daily incidents. Since 2000, the Asian population in New York City has increased by 51%, growing from just under 873,000 in 2000 to over 1.3 million in 2019, making up 16% of our city's total population. Put another way, 1.3 million New Yorkers need to feel safe and many don't.

This budget season, we, and our member and partner organizations, are advocating in the context of an emergency. We're joined here today with other Asian American nonprofits who are fighting this crisis through in-language and culturally-competent direct services support because our seniors are isolated due to the pandemic, but it's the fear of violence that keeps them venturing out as we look to the pandemic recovery. Our small businesses are teetering, many already bankrupt, with 60% of small business owners saying in a recent survey conducted by AAF that fear of anti-Asian xenophobia has impacted themselves, their staff, and their establishments. Our immigrant communities, long familiar with the ostracization and violence of being the "other," continue to live in the shadows, weary of engaging government entities, and finding their local nonprofits first.

So why are we here? Because it's our member and partner organizations who are fighting this fight with us. The work they've done in their capacities as mental health providers, senior service providers, immigration advocates and other direct service support should be argument enough to continue funding them.

But the moment calls for far more than continuity. It calls for a coordinated campaign that sees the immediate crisis as an impetus for long-term, community-driven solutions that stem the tide of rising

anti-Asian hate and creates lasting community resiliencies across our City. That's why we're asking the City Council to provide $10 million in new initiative funding for our Hope Against Hate Campaign.

This $10 million will go towards a wholesome, community-driven approach that gets funding to the expert CBOs on the ground to do the following across our City:

- **Empowering our community-based nonprofits to act as reporting centers for bias incidents** through an in-language reporting tool in order to connect victims to the services they need.
- **In-depth anti-violence, upstander trainings that go well beyond what is already being provided by the City and its partners**.
- Aside from empowering our neighbors and community members across our City, these trainings will also feed into **safety ambassador programs that will consist of volunteers to escort vulnerable community members** who are also trained in self-defense and mental health first aid. These programs will start off in our hardest-hit communities, building a pool of community-based, culturally-competent safety experts who can on-board more volunteers.
- **Create safe zones in communities throughout NYC** to serve as safe havens for targeted Asian Americans by partnering with small businesses, houses of worship and other community focal points. These safe zones will involve training entities to connect people to Asian community-based organizations and creating clusters of easily-identifiable safe-haven spaces throughout our City.

So much of the work requires supporting the organizations within our community already doing the work. And while anti-Asian hate requires a massive coordinated response, it's just one fight our nonprofits are undertaking right now.

For example, AAF has provided direct technical support and capacity building services to over 100 small business owners along Union Street, Flushing. Our small business program functioned as a critical hub for business education and as a critical conduit between the City and our small businesses. However, this program ended in January, so we're asking the City Council to allocate an initial investment of $1 million for an Asian small business support center to continue the work that has seen increased demand.

And when it comes to immigration and integration, this Budget is a pivotal opportunity for our government to regain the trust of our immigrant communities. To this end, City Council must set aside $2 million for immigration legal services funding for community-based organizations with a track record of providing not only immigration legal services but also case management services to connect community members to legal services.

And on top of funding a fully and consistently-implemented Local Law 30, we're asking City Council to fund a community legal interpreter bank with $2 million and commit $250,000 per worker co-op for three langage translation co-ops covering Asian, African, and Latin American languages. From providing employment opportunities in our immigrant communities to relieving strains on existing CBO capacity to provide interpretation, the benefits would be multi-faceted.

And especially in our direct services work, we need City Council to step up to the challenge to address the access and capacity challenges of our service providers with an initial $2 million investment to provide culturally competent mental health programs, ranging from formalizing community education programs to capacity-building efforts and replicating successful program models by training mainstream organizations as well as Asian-serving organizations. The City must also increase investment in safety

net programs, such as community health centers and clinics, as well as food pantries, owing to continued aftereffect of the last Administration's Public Charge assault.

The Asian community has been on the frontlines during an unprecedented year that saw our City get through an unprecedented pandemic. Our community members continue to be on the frontlines regardless of the fact that anti-Asian violence is a daily occurence. in 28 City Council districts, Asian Americans make up at least 10% of the population. But across our City, our community is growing and contributing to our neighborhoods.

**Fund our community-based organizations and fund our Hope Against Hate Campaign. The work they've done is more than the demonstration City Council needs to continue funding them but the crisis at hand is why continuity isn't enough. As we come out of this pandemic, we MUST prioritize short term solutions to keep communities safe, and long term solutions to provide services that lift our community out of poverty and harm. How we choose to spend our city resources during this critical time will speak volumes about our values, and we ask the City Council to prioritize community.**

We look forward to working with all of you to make sure we come out of the pandemic stronger, together. Thank you.

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**Testimony of Arab-American Family Support Center Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance**

**May 25, 2021**

I want to begin by thanking the Committee on Finance, Committee Chair Dromm, and the entire New York City Council for holding this Fiscal Year 22 Executive Budget hearing. My name is Kerry Sesil, Senior Director of Resource Development at the Arab-American Family Support Center (AAFSC).

At the Arab-American Family Support Center, we have dedicated ourselves to creating an inclusive haven for immigrants and refugees for over 26 years. We promote mental and physical well-being, prevent gender-based violence, and get families ready to learn, work, and succeed. While our doors are open to all, we have gained cultural and linguistic competency serving New York's growing Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (AMEMSA) communities. As a culturally and linguistically competent, trauma-informed organization, AAFSC has expanded to offer services throughout the five boroughs and hired additional staff in response to growing community needs. Our team now speak over 27 languages including Arabic, Bangla, Hindi, Urdu, Nepali, Pashto, and Punjabi – enabling us to serve New Yorkers effectively.

As a community-based organization providing vital services to the most marginalized, AAFSC has remained opened since the start of the pandemic. We expanded our outreach across programs and launched new initiatives to meet the heightened need for mental health services, support for survivors of domestic violence, academic enrichment for youth, cash assistance, access to health insurance and food safety, and linguistically competent health information. For home-based programs like our Preventive Services Program, we have invested heavily in PPE. Like many other organizations, we have also devoted significant resources into HIPAA-compliant, confidential teleconferencing platforms and extended staff hours.

While COVID-19 is threatening the well-being of all, vulnerable communities, like the immigrants and refugees we serve, are facing acute difficulties because of pre-existing housing, food, and economic instability. For survivors of gender-based violence and families impacted by child abuse and neglect, social distancing and directives to remain home can be frightening and dangerous - our Anti-Violence Program has seen a 40% increase in services provided since last year. We have supported over 1,400 survivors of domestic violence, who found security and support through AAFSC case management, crisis intervention, court accompaniments, and safety plan assistance. Additionally, we launched a Domestic Violence Helpline that provides access to culturally and linguistically competent crisis intervention services with extended evening hours and weekends. Through our Preventive Program, we provided over 6,600 home visits to families to ensure the safety of children who may be in at-risk environments.

For those managing depression and anxiety and for those being targeted by hateful discrimination as a result of COVID-19, these times present new challenges. We have seen a 325% increase in the number of crisis intervention and individual counseling services since last March. AAFSC's COVID-19 Impact

Survey showed that over 74% of the families surveyed are facing hardship and 45% are dealing with increased depression – in response, we have provided over 900 counselling sessions to our community members.

AAFSC remains committed to ensuring that families have health insurance and SNAP benefits, increasing our outreach and education efforts, and distributing health resource information in multiple languages which increased our SNAP enrollment numbers by 357%. The need for our Emergency Fund increased by 60% - most of the requests for the Emergency Fund were to buy groceries. With the support of the City Council, we have provided over $353,000 to 2,000 beneficiaries.

The Arab-American Family Support Center, like many non-profits across the city, has remained a resource during the most trying times for our neighbors even in the face of budget cuts. We invested extensive resources to prevent dire food and economic insecurity, to provide relevant linguistically accessible health information, and to provide a safe space for those managing discrimination and depression. As we continue to serve as New York's safety net, we respectfully request City Council's support in the coming fiscal year.

Specifically, we request that the following initiatives are prioritized in the budget for the upcoming year:

- We are calling on NY City Council to create Recovery and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers, a new $4 million citywide initiative to support social services by Asian-American-led and -serving community-based organizations to address the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes and disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our communities, while laying the groundwork for long term healing for APA New Yorkers.
- Enhance the Access Health NYC Initiative to $3 Million, to provide more linguistically appropriate and culturally responsive services to all.
- Restore $9.805 Million to Domestic Violence and Empowerment Initiative (DoVE).
- Enhance $4 Million to Adult Literacy Initiative that creates basic literacy and English for Speakers of Other Languages and Graduate Equivalency Degree classes for adults who cannot read, write or speak English.
- Restore Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations to $3.2 Million for mental health services for vulnerable populations, including those in APA or AMEMSA organizations.
- Restore $6.375 Million to Cultural Immigrant Initiative that supports APA-led organizations or APA-serving organizations to provide programming focused on the cultural history of the diverse APA organizations within the many immigrant communities in NYC.
- Continue to call on the Administration to fully invest in adequate indirect cost rates.

Thank you for your attention. As always, the Arab-American Family Support Center stands rea.dy to work with you in ensuring the most vulnerable among us thrive.

# Testimony of
# Beth Finkel
# AARP New York

# New York City Council
# Committee on Finance

# FY22 Executive Budget

# May 25, 2021

# Remote Hearing
# New York, New York

**Contact: Kevin Jones (646) 668-7550 | kjones@aarp.org**

**AARP Testimony - City Council Finance Committee - FY22 Executive Budget Public Testimony**

Subject: AARP NY FY22 Executive Budget Priorities

Good afternoon Chair Dromm and members of the City Council Committee on Finance. My name is Beth Finkel and I am the State Director at AARP New York, representing 750,000 New York City members of AARP. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify at today's public hearing portion of the City Council's FY22 Executive Budget hearings, where I will be reiterating our priorities for the final FY22 adopted budget and further underscoring the needs of New York's 50+ community as the City reopens and recovers from COVID-19.

As many of you already know, older adults are one of the fastest growing populations in New York City and will continue to make up a greater share of the City's residents in the coming years. Despite the growing need for aging-related services throughout New York City, the City's services and programming for older adults remain chronically underfunded as the Department for the Aging's budget continues to make up less than half of a percentage of the City's entire budget.

These issues prior to the pandemic have only been compounded as COVID-19 has brought about new challenges and issues for 50+ New Yorkers, especially in terms of accessing meals, technology, healthcare, and other vital services and programs to support individuals through the pandemic and remain connected to loved ones and the outside world.

As a result of this reality, AARP New York calls on the City Council and City Hall to fully fund key programs and services in the FY22 budget that will support New York City's 50+ community in order to guarantee a fair and just recovery in the months ahead.

Specifically, we are calling on the City to meet the unique needs of 50+ New Yorkers by making the following investments in the final FY22 Budget:

1. Investing $16.6 million in additional funding for home delivered meals to meet the increased demand for meals caused by COVID-19, as well as to support the City's network of providers by raising the per-meal reimbursement rate to the national average. This would include $13.6 million for weekday meals and $3 million for weekend and holiday meals.
2. Securing $4.4 million in one-time funding to address the City's 'Digital Divide' by supporting technology services for Senior Centers and expanding overall access to technology among older New Yorkers.

While both of these items were included in the Council's preliminary budget response, we urge the City Council to work with City Hall and ensure that both of these critical items are included in the final FY22 Adopted Budget.

3. Ensuring that the $10 million in funding promised for the Model Senior Center Budget is honored and included in the final FY22 budget to support Senior Center staff and development.
4. Supporting the City's network of nonprofits and community based organizations that provide critical services to 50+ New Yorkers, specifically by:
    a. Fully funding the Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) Initiative for FY21, FY22, and future years, as outlined in the Mayor's Executive Budget.
    b. Creating a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for all human service contracts at a rate of 3%, which would amount to $48 million in total for the budget.
    c. Providing funding for comprehensive emergency pay for human service workers, retroactive to March 23, 2020.
5. Last, AARP calls on the City to restore and fully fund all City Council aging-related discretionary funds to FY20 levels to support critical programs for older New Yorkers, specifically:
    a. Support Our Seniors - $5,100,000
    b. The Geriatric Mental Health Initiative - $2,860,000
    c. Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities - $5,400,325
    d. The Healthy Aging Initiative - $2,040,000
    e. SU-CASA - $3,315,000
    f. Immigrant Senior Centers - $1,500,000

Thank you all for providing us with the opportunity to testify today, and we look forward to working together in the weeks ahead to ensure that the City meets the needs of 50+ New Yorkers in the final FY22 Budget.

अधिकार
adhikaar

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**Adhikaar for Human Rights and Social Justice**
**Testimony Submitted to the Finance Committee**
*Preliminary Budget Hearing for FY22*
**May 25, 2021**

Dear members of the Finance Committee:

Adhikaar is an immigrant women-led organization based in Woodside, New York. Since 2005, we are the only social justice organization serving and mobilizing the Nepali-speaking community—an underserved, undercounted, and underfunded community—with an estimated 10,000 community members turning to Adhikaar every year. Often referred to as our community's 911 and 311 line, our center in Woodside (pre-pandemic) is a vibrant space where community members participate in programs, gather socially, and troubleshoot community concerns. Through these programs and services, they become familiar with Adhikaar. Members join our language-accessible English for Empowerment (EFE) classes, citizenship preparation classes and workforce development trainings. Many contact us to enroll in healthcare, seek housing, protection from domestic violence, or support for their immigration or workers' rights issues. These programs and services are the initial and critical life saving stages of our work and feed into our organizing and advocacy efforts. Through a holistic approach that flows from service to organizing, our members gain the leadership and skills to advance workers' rights, immigration justice, healthcare access, and language justice from the grassroots.

"*About 4 years ago, I heard about Adhikaar from my friend. She told me Adhikaar had free English classes so I started coming. And I am very thankful because I learned so much - not only English but, you know, survival skills. Getting from place to place, taking the train, understanding my rights at work. In my work, it made me more confident. I was more assertive about my rights- like getting breaks and asking for more pay. And that also changed my relationship with my boss. In my own life, I am proud of myself.*" - ***Mohini, Adhikaar member***

The Nepali-speaking community is one of the newer immigrant communities and according to a report by the Asian American Federation, the fastest growing Asian ethnic group. Most of our members are nail salon workers, domestic workers, taxi drivers, restaurant workers, and other informal sector workers. They largely live in Jackson Heights, Woodside, East Elmhurst, Elmhurst, Corona, Maspeth, Sunnyside, Ridgewood, Jamaica and Flatbush. Many of our members are women-identifying and are of mixed family status, on temporary visas or undocumented. They often come from marginalized ethnic groups in South Asia and primarily speak Nepali with limited literacy or formal schooling. They often face discrimination at the intersection of race, class, gender, caste, and immigration status. Too often, their struggles are rendered invisible, making our members vulnerable to exploitation and structural violence. COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these conditions and the ripples of the pandemic are shifting industries, and in turn, shifting how our members navigate systems to meet their daily needs. In response we have deepened our commitment to culturally competent in-language trainings and

resources, direct services, and campaigns and programs that increase the leadership and power of Nepali-speaking immigrant workers living in NYC and across the country.

*"Especially after COVID-19 I have thoughts about leaving the industry, but then I remember that this work is how I've been able to support my family, and I have found a home with Adhikaar and the other members. Yes, there are lots of problems like health and safety problems too and I am afraid of going to work sometimes, but I think we can make this a better industry, not just for ourselves but for everyone." -* ***Maya, Adhikaar Worker Leader and Nail Salon Workers' Association Vice Chair***

Queens was in the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in NYC. As cases began to surge, thousands of community members reached out to Adhikaar seeking financial and employment assistance, emergency relief, and a safe space to grieve. To meet their urgent demands we quickly transitioned our operations remotely and pivoted into rapid response efforts. We developed a COVID-19 Community Response Plan that focused on direct relief and services, workforce support and development, advocacy, and organizing. Since March 2020, we have provided direct support to more than 4000 people, facilitating their access to unemployment, health care, language access, and medical and food supplies. We have also provided nearly half a million dollars in direct emergency relief resources to 750+ community members, focusing our efforts on those ineligible for state or federal relief, and delivered and distributed food, emergency PPE supplies, and care packages to more than 600 households. We also ran virtual unemployment clinics, supporting 360+ members with limited English literacy, TPS, and those working in informal sectors with their unemployment application. Our work also involved directing 450+ in-language healthcare inquiries and coordination of virtual consultations.

In addition to direct support, we created a 15-part public education video series to address community concerns around the pandemic and to provide regular updates on local and federal campaigns. We also pushed for quarantine facilities, advocated for better language access within administrative agencies including DOL, fought to ensure that TPS holders were eligible for COVID relief packages, joined the Fund Excluded Workers campaign, and advocated with NY Healthy Nail Salon Coalition members to ensure that worker members' demands were reflected in the state phase 3 reopening guidelines for nail salons. Even with these important wins, our community continues to suffer record levels of unemployment and financial, housing, and food insecurity. In response we have integrated COVID-19 relief and recovery efforts into all of our program areas.

Another central piece of our work is pushing for low-wage immigrant workers—particularly domestic workers and nail salon workers—to be recognized as essential workers. For the past 15+ years we have improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of Nepali-speaking immigrants in NY. Highlights include passage of the NY Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights and unprecedented emergency actions by Governor Cuomo for nail salon workers in 2015 and 2016. At the heart of these policy wins is building the leadership of our worker members to share their stories and demands for a more just future. We do this through in-language workforce development programs, KYR sessions, general member meetings and other programs that ensure they have the tools and skills necessary to navigate their workplaces, families, and broader communities. Whether it be by increasing wages or providing people work permits, our efforts have helped people make ends meet and thrive. Over the years, hundreds if not thousands of member leaders have shared their stories with elected officials and advocated for change

in partnership with other communities of color. Many have deeply engaged in our campaigns, boldly spoke out against issues that impact them and marched on streets for policy reform and justice.

The pandemic brought on new and emerging challenges for our domestic worker and nail salon members. To address devastating levels of unemployment and job scarcity, we worked directly with member leaders and peer educators to train-up members' digital skills to participate in critical workforce development trainings. One example is our "We Rise" digital Nanny training done in collaboration with Cornell ILR and the National Domestic Workers Alliance-NY. Over 70 domestic workers gained the skills and resources to negotiate a fair wage, share information with other domestic workers on rights and benefits, and build agency and confidence within the community. Similarly, within our nail salon work, we partnered with NYCOSH and WU to offer a workers-rights based curriculum in Nepali and Spanish with trainings led by peer worker trainers. Through this curriculum we have supported hundreds of low-literacy workers to pass the complex state-level board certification exam and gain new skills, increased confidence, and economic mobility.

We also engaged in innovative advocacy efforts including the campaign for Int 339-- an effort to expand protections for domestic workers by amending the NYC administrative code and expanding human rights law to include domestic workers. We also launched the NYC Care Platform which seeks to transform the care sector to become sustainable, fair, and equitable and raise standards to provide security to domestic workers, in particular workers of color. We also recognized that the transformation of the nail salon industry requires engagement with a range of stakeholders including owners. We regularly support 70 nail salon employers with guidance on high road employer models and facilitation of connections to government resources (e.g. accessing grants, guidance on re-opening salons). Together we're growing a base of owners that center workers rights and aims to raise industry standards for all.

*"Adhikaar has always supported me and given me opportunities to succeed. I am a TPS holder and was part of the TPS Core Committee. In February [2019], I shared my story at a big rally and I was really scared and emotional. I was happy that I got to speak alongside my Congresswoman, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. I know that our stories are what made the Dream and Promise Act possible." -* ***Rukmani, Domestic Worker fellow and TPS holder***

At Adhikaar we believe immigrants rights are central to an inclusive democracy. One example is our groundbreaking TPS campaign. Adhikaar has been active on TPS since we fought for and won Nepal's designation in 2015. Community members initially turned to us for support in registering and renewing their TPS applications through our legal clinics. Through town halls, KYRs, and trainings, we have built a cohort of community members who lead and advocate for the rights of Nepali TPS holders. Today we are a national leader in the movement for TPS, and have put TPS at the forefront of the immigration reform movement and campaign for permanent residency. Depending on the outcome of the ongoing TPS litigation and/or possibility of redesignation, we envision a substantial demand in services and plan to host large-scale legal clinics in partnership with our legal service providers to provide application support to Nepali TPS holders across NYC to protect their right to remain.

This is a snapshot of our bold approach—one that ensures the grassroots is at the heart of service delivery and systems change. For more than 15 years, we have been providing critical direct support

and creating pathways for Nepali-speaking community members to be seen and heard in NYC. And yet, minimal funding has been provided by the city to support our work. To meet the demands of our growing community and provide resources to help them become tomorrow's citizens, we are requesting funding and capital support from the Finance Committee to support our critical direct services work including our workforce development training, legal services, adult literacy classes and our COVID-19 response. Through our direct services, we are engaging members and developing a new community of leaders who push gender, class and other boundaries within their families, in their places of work, and within and outside the halls of government. This transformative work needs resources to ensure that our growing community in New York City not only survives, but thrives.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

ADVANCE | MORE OPERA
The Association for the Development of Vocal Artistry and Neighborhood Cultural Enrichment
Manhattan Opera Repertory Ensemble
Ansonia Station Box 231152, New York, NY 10023

Testimony to the New York City Council
Executive Budget Oversight Hearings - Finance
T2021-7461

Submitted by

Cheryl Warfield
Professional Opera Singer, Teaching Artist, Producer and Founder of ADVANCE/MORE Opera

Tuesday, May 25, 2021

Good afternoon. Thank you, Chair Dromm, my own council member Rosenthal, CM Van Bramer, and other committee and council members for the opportunity to testify before this body on behalf of arts and culture.

I write to you today to urge the inclusion of $70 million in funding for the Cultural Plan for Recovery (CPR) and $10 million to support NYC's independent artists and cultural workers.

Please allow me to introduce myself. I am Cheryl Warfield, an African American opera singer, teaching artist, and a long-standing member of SAG-AFTRA, Actor's Equity and my parent union, the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA). In New York City, I have performed at the Metropolitan Opera and on Broadway. I am also the founder of ADVANCE a 501(c) 3 non-profit and the artistic director of MORE Opera.

ADVANCE (The Association for the Development of Vocal Artistry and Neighborhood Cultural Enrichment) was founded over 20 years ago to provide performing opportunities for talented classically trained singers, particularly artists of color and to provide outreach to underserved communities. To that end, ADVANCE and MORE Opera mount dozens of educational programs workshops and no-cost community choral training to hundreds of people every year to contribute to the musical education of young people while showcasing black themes and spotlighting diversity.

Small BIPOC led organizations like mine were started due to the needs of underserved communities, and from inception have been in the trenches providing services often without or with limited funding, and without an invitation to the table to help us flourish. Despite these limitations, we have been able to provide services to our targeted communities.

Our first endeavor was a historical exploration of African American spirituals titled "Paul Robeson: A Celebration of Culture" that focused on the life and significant research of spirituals that Robeson documented while black-listed. This program has been presented in many formats and iterations, including a 7-week residency on spirituals for grades 4 through 8. Musical clips from a New York performance can be found at https://youtu.be/djkGk0kCRfk.

We have capacity to do three times more educational programming than we currently do. This is in part due to our ineligibility for DCLA contracts like CASA and Su Casa. There are many non-profit organizations with budgets under $250 K like ADVANCE that do not qualify for DCLA but are listed on the NYC Vendor List and are engaged on a limited basis for special projects through DOE and DYCD contracts. It would be beneficial to both the government agencies and DCLA-ineligible organizations if these organizations could receive CASA and Su Casa contracts to provide educational programs outside of DCLA, perhaps through arts councils.

I remind you that culture generates $110B in economic activity for the city and employs nearly 400,000 people, and that neighborhoods with cultural assets show better outcomes for education, aging, crime, health, and community well-being.

Arts and culture are essential to New York City's economic recovery and for quality education. The City must be forward thinking and lay a strong foundation to stimulate the economy with initiatives that rebuild and restore arts and culture, fund arts education, and provide greater access to City contracts for artists and non-profits of color working in underserved communities hit hardest by the pandemic that are not eligible for DCLA funding.

To that end, I wholeheartedly support $70M in CPR funding which includes:

--restoring funding for critical cultural initiatives
--baseline funding for the Coalition of Theaters of Color
--an additional $30M to DCLA

an additional $40M for culture to heal our communities and lead the city's economic recovery including social and emotional learning and anti-violence programs.

AND the continuation of the Artists Corps workforce program. Thank you for all your efforts towards a greater, more equitable and just New York. Please see the attached proposals detailing all the above.

Thank you reading my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

Cheryl Warfield
Singer, Educator, Producer and Founder, ADVANCE/MORE Opera
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Enc. FY22 Cultural Plan
FY22 Request for Independent Artists and Cultural Workers

www.moreopera.com

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MW2yGc7iTkg

## Cultural Plan For Recovery (CPR) - TOTAL ASK: $70M

**New York City's cultural community and those it employs and serves continue to grapple with the economic losses COVID brought. There is no recovery without the arts, and the below package ensures the City invests in this community in an equitable way that best reaches those people, programs, and organizations who need support and can lead the sector forward.**

**$15M** - Cultural Equity Fund created as a way of investing in BIPOC led / BIPOC serving cultural organizations in order to establish better equity in arts and cultural funding. Funding will go to organizations of all sizes to support:

- General operating support for BIPOC led organizations
- Advancement of Anti-racism work - with a priority given to BIPOC-led organizations

This fund begins to undo a history of systemic underfunding of cultural organizations in communities of color - and reflects decades of activism by those organizations via such alliances as the Cultural Equity Group. This Cultural Equity Fund also shows NYC's commitment to the CreateNYC plan by advancing social and racial justice throughout our cultural field. This fund answers the Urgency of Now.

**$30M** - Restoration of funding historically added at Adoption split 50/50 between CIGs and CDF funded program groups with a carve-out for CUNY Corps. This demonstrates a restoration of $20.2M from FY21 and an additional $9.8 investment to bring this funding back to prior levels. Also asking the Council for a full restoration of all initiatives, including the baselining of Coalition Theaters of Color.

**$5M** - Added to DCLA's budget to increase its capacity to support this investment in New York City's arts and cultural community.

**$10M** - Funding for non-profit performing arts, to keep them solvent while they remain shuttered and to support their additional cost when they can reopen. The nonprofit performing arts are uniquely harmed by the pandemic; they were the first to close and will be the last to reopen, and were largely shut out of State aid for for-profit performing arts venues. When these institutions are able to reopen, we anticipate that audiences will be greatly diminished—typically 80% full is the break-even point—and we will incur significant new costs to open safely (such as rapid testing of staff and artists and protocols like CLEAR for audiences). Short term relief will help this sector through this period. Funding should be commensurate with organization size to be meaningful.

**$10M** - Fund to invest in cultural groups in neighborhoods and communities hardest hit by COVID. Relief grants available to cultural organizations of every size to help them stabilize and recover from the economic devastation of COVID. This fund will target arts and culture groups and independent artists located in and/or doing work in communities hardest hit by COVID - determined by zip codes that had the highest infection and highest death tolls. It can also mean groups and artists in the disabled community who suffered disproportionately. The goal is to save the most vulnerable organizations, most at risk of closing, whose services are the most needed in these neighborhoods which had the fewest cultural assets before COVID.

REQUEST to support NYC's independent artists and cultural workers

*The people in the arts and cultural sector who create and bring arts and culture to the public are essential to the economic recovery of New York's neighborhoods and in maintaining New York's creative edge in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.*

*This request creates a direct support mechanism for independent art workers that both extends immediate relief and lays the foundation for ongoing annual investment in the development of the city's creative workforce.*

It supports:

1. The development and creation of a city-wide Artists' Registry (first proposed in Council Intro 2195) to build a stronger information exchange to and from our sector's creative workforce, open to all residents regardless of immigration status. The Registry will build on other borough specific and discipline specific mailing lists and registries as well as the NYC Artists Corps. It will provide access to opportunities by linking, for example, to the NYC ID program and will further create a data mechanism for reporting on the sector's workforce, validating much-needed information for an often hard to reach segment of the city's general workforce.

2. The continuation of the NYC Artists Corps. This builds on and deepens the Mayor's commitment of $25M towards the launch of this initiative, which runs July through December. The program's growth throughout the year will strengthen new relationships in all boroughs with community organizations, arts organizations, and city agencies. This fund will capitalize on the program's work, and incorporate lessons learned from historic labor programs such as the CETA community engagement program, to build an invaluable creative workforce development program for NYC.

The ecosystem of the arts, cultural, and entertainment sector is driven by the fuel of creativity and talents of its largely invisible engine - *individual artists and cultural workers.* While the sector as a whole struggles to recover from the economic impact of the pandemic, the very people who are the mainstays of NYC's creative industries are running on empty, disproportionately impacting creative workers in historically under resourced communities.

In February NYS Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli highlighted that this sector saw the largest decline among all sectors in the city's economy due to COVID-19. Employment declined by *66%* over a one-year period ending in December 2020.

Lives throughout our sector have been upended by the realities of job losses and income losses in both the non-profit and profit creative worlds. This has only

exacerbated the income fragility that has long existed for individual art workers and has further impacted the neighborhoods in which they live and work. This funding for art workers acknowledges a major gap in our arts and cultural ecosystem, and seeks to address perennial workforce issues so essential to attracting and maintaining a creative workforce in NY.

NYC's CreateNYC cultural plan points out the need to better support the city's individual artists and shows how New Yorkers benefit from their engagement with artists. These initiatives take a transformational step towards changing the support system for our sector's workforce so artists and cultural workers can remain and thrive in New York; it positions NYC in a major leadership role in its commitment to the people – not just the objects and buildings – who are essential to the vitality and health of our arts and cultural ecosystem and to providing increased access for all New Yorkers to the impact of the arts in their lives. This major investment will allow New York to rebuild and recover with the renewed imagination and creativity and spirit this moment demands.

Advocates for Children of New York
Protecting every child's right to learn

**Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council**
**Committee on Finance**

**Re: Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget**

**May 25, 2021**

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget. My name is Randi Levine, and I am the Policy Director of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC). For 50 years, AFC has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. Every year, we help thousands of families navigate New York City's school system. We speak out for students whose needs are often overlooked, such as students with disabilities, students from immigrant families, students who are homeless, students in foster care, and students with mental health needs.

Over the past year, the pandemic has caused unprecedented disruption to the education of children and youth—and the students hit hardest have been those who were already struggling in school or marginalized on the basis of race, poverty, disability, immigration status, English proficiency, homelessness, or involvement in the child welfare or juvenile or criminal justice systems. With the NYC Department of Education receiving a historic influx of state and federal funding, the City must use that funding effectively to provide needed academic and social-emotional support, incorporating outreach to students and families who have not yet re-engaged and specialized support for students who need it.

The Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget includes some important education investments, including 100% Fair Student Funding for all schools. In addition, we are encouraged to see investments in areas such as special education services, preschool special education, and social workers. However, the Executive Budget is short on details in some areas and provides inadequate funding levels to meet the need in other areas.

We understand the City is still determining the details of how to use its federal relief funding for schools, but the details will be critically important to ensuring impactful

use of this infusion of resources. Based on our work on the ground partnering with individual families to help their children succeed in school, we urge Mayor de Blasio and the City Council to negotiate a budget that includes explicit commitments to the following education investments.

## ACADEMIC RECOVERY AND STUDENT SUPPORTS:

The Executive Budget includes $500M for FY 22 for "academic recovery and student supports" with no detail about how the money will be used. We recommend the final FY 22 budget include:

- **$50M for evidence-based, culturally responsive reading curricula for core instruction**, as recommended in the City Council's response to the preliminary budget. Before the pandemic, less than half of NYC students were reading proficiently, with alarming disparities based on race, disability, language, and housing status. As the City recovers from the pandemic, it cannot afford to have schools using outdated curricula shown not to be effective. The City should provide schools with a menu of curricular options from which to choose—options that ensure all students receive explicit, systematic instruction in foundational literacy skills—and must fund the purchase of the materials and training necessary for successful implementation.
- **$150M to provide targeted one-on-one or small-group intervention to students who need more help learning to read**. Last summer, the DOE began matching small groups of students in need of additional literacy support with educators the City had already trained in delivering effective interventions. The DOE should expand this program into the 2021-22 school year, leveraging current staff and hiring and training a new corps of tutors. Last week, AFC released a report about the need for investments in literacy curriculum and intervention. The report is online at **https://www.advocatesforchildren.org/turning_the_page**.
- **$100M to provide students with "high-dosage" small group tutoring in a range of subjects**, as recommended in the City Council's response to the preliminary budget. Such programming must include specialized support for students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and students in the juvenile and criminal justice systems and must include bus service or other door-to-door transportation for students who need it to access any tutoring offered outside the regular school day.
- **$100 million to provide targeted support to English Language Learners (ELLs)** and ensure ELLs receive the legally required English as a New Language (ENL) or bilingual instruction they were denied during the pandemic. This investment should include $80M for targeted summer, after-school, and Saturday

programs and tutoring for ELLs and ELLs with disabilities; small group literacy support; and professional learning for school staff on ELL instruction and family engagement; as well as $20M for grants to community-based organizations to provide academic programming for ELLs, including after-school and Saturday programs, and family engagement activities. ELLs have a legal right to receive ENL or bilingual instruction, but many ELLs did not receive this instruction during the pandemic. Despite the immense challenges ELLs faced in participating meaningfully in remote learning and the lack of language support, the Executive Budget does not direct any COVID-19 relief funding to support for ELLs.

## COMPENSATORY SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

The Executive Budget includes a new investment of $236 million in FY 22 for special education services, including compensatory services. However, there is no detail about how this funding will be used and no plan for providing make-up instruction and services to students. The FY 22 budget should include:

- **Sufficient funding for compensatory services** so students with disabilities can get the make-up instruction and services to which they are entitled as a result of the pandemic. The DOE must ensure there is adequate funding for staff to identify which students need compensatory services and what services they need, as well as for staff or other providers to deliver those services. We cannot assess the adequacy of the funding level in the Executive Budget until the DOE releases a public plan explaining how students will be assessed for and receive the compensatory services they have a right to receive and how the services will be staffed.

## PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION:

The Executive Budget includes a new investment of $22M in FY 22, going up to $88M in FY 23, for preschool special education. While we are pleased to see an investment in preschool special education and strongly support several of the initiatives proposed for FY 22 (for example, adding 3-K integrated classes and hiring inclusion coaches, Early Intervention transition coordinators, and preschool special education administrators), there is no funding slated for FY 22 to address the preschool special education class shortage, which has left children without the classes they need, or provide salary parity to teachers—and no commitment to providing salary parity even in FY 23. Under the City's salary parity agreement, other early childhood teachers will receive salary increases in October 2021, leading preschool

special class teachers to flock to general education classes and leaving children with disabilities without teachers. Preschoolers with significant disabilities should not have to wait another year for the City to make needed investments to meet their needs. The FY 22 budget should include:

- **$85M to address the preschool special education class shortage and provide salary parity** to teachers of preschool special education classes at CBOs, as recommended in the City Council's response to the preliminary budget.

## MENTAL HEALTH FOR ALL AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE:

While the Executive Budget includes funding for additional social workers and the expansion of restorative justice, the funding is inadequate to meet the significant needs that exist following the pandemic. The FY 22 budget should include:

- **Sufficient funding to add enough clinically-trained mental health staff in schools or partnered with schools** to ensure that all students who need direct mental health services have access to timely, high-quality services in school and in the community. While the City is proposing to add 500 social workers in schools for FY 22, 2,220 social workers are needed to reach the ratio of 1 social worker to 250 general education students recommended by the National Association of Social Workers. Even more social workers are needed to provide the necessary mental health services to students with intensive needs where the recommended ratio is 1 social worker to 50 students. This investment must include enough clinical supervisors, social workers, and behavioral specialists housed in schools and through partnerships with community-based organizations to ensure appropriate oversight, training, and coaching of school-based mental health and instructional staff in effective behavior supports and interventions for students.
- **$15M for a Mental Health Continuum,** as recommended by the Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline and in the City Council's response to the preliminary budget, to provide an integrated system of targeted, intensive mental health supports for students in high-need schools. This model includes school partnerships with hospital-based mental health clinics; a call-in center to advise school staff about students in crisis; mobile response teams with mental health professionals who respond to students in crisis; direct mental health services; School Based Mental Health Clinicians; and whole-school training in Collaborative Problem Solving, an evidence-based, skill-building approach. This model will meet the needs of students with significant mental health challenges in the schools and neighborhoods with the highest rates of NYPD interventions, suspensions, and chronic absenteeism.

- **At least $118.5M to expand school-wide restorative justice practices to 500 high schools**, scaled up to full implementation city-wide within five years by investing $225M, by hiring a restorative justice coordinator in each school; training all staff and interested members of school communities on restorative practices; providing young people with training and stipends to lead restorative practices in schools; and partnering with community-based organizations to support programs in schools. By building and healing relationships, addressing the root causes of behavior, holding students accountable, and teaching positive behaviors, restorative practices have been proven to work in schools across New York City and around the country: their adoption is correlated with improved academic outcomes, school climate, and staff-student relationships. The Executive Budget includes an increase of only $12M for restorative justice, far less than the $53M recommended by the City Council or the $118.5M needed for expansion to 500 high schools in FY 2022 and the $225M needed for full implementation city-wide, as the Mayor pledged to do, by FY 2027.

## OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS:

There does not appear to be any new funding in the Executive Budget targeted for the outreach and communication needed to help students and families reconnect with school following the pandemic. The FY 22 budget should include:

- **$55M to hire 500 community coordinators, including 150 shelter-based community coordinators**, to engage in intensive strengths-based outreach to ensure that students who are disconnected from school can reengage in school and access support offered outside of school such as summer programming or after-school tutoring. The City should tailor efforts to focus on specific populations of students such as older youth, students who are homeless, students from immigrant communities, and students in the juvenile and criminal justice systems.
- **$46M for a DOE multilingual communications and outreach plan** to communicate with parents in multiple languages using a variety of media platforms and methods. Many families, including those whose home language is not English and those who have low digital literacy or literacy skills, have been left in the dark due to poor communication from their schools and from the City during the pandemic. Instead of relying heavily on the internet and email, the DOE should use multiple media, such as individual phone calls, text messages, notices on paper, and videos sent directly to families, as well as ethnic television and radio, to share information with families. The DOE should also fund approaches such as paying parents to serve as communications ambassadors and paying CBOs in immigrant communities to help reach additional families.

## SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE:

There does not appear to be any funding in the Executive Budget targeted to supporting students in foster care. The FY 22 budget should include:

- **$1.5M for a small DOE office focused on students in foster care**. Currently, the DOE does not have an office, team, or even a single staff member solely dedicated to supporting youth in care, even though students in foster care have the lowest graduation rate of any student group in NYC. The DOE should launch an office with central and borough-based staff to serve as a point of contact for schools, families, and child welfare professionals with questions about students in foster care; develop and implement policies regarding students in foster care; train and support schools on the rights of students in foster care; support parental involvement in education; and track and improve educational outcomes, opportunities, and programming for students in foster care. This month, AFC and the Legal Aid Society released a report on the need for this office. The report is online at **https://www.advocatesforchildren.org/node/1780** .
- **$5M to guarantee bus service or other door-to-door transportation for students in foster care** so they can maintain school stability whenever they enter foster care or change foster homes. While the law requires the City to provide transportation so students can remain in their original schools when they enter foster care or change foster homes, unless it is in their best interests to transfer to a new school, the City does not currently guarantee bus service or comparable transportation to students in foster care. Guaranteeing busing is especially important as students return to school following the disruption of the pandemic.

## SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS IN JUVENILE DETENTION:

There does not appear to be any new funding in the Executive Budget targeted to supporting the education of students in juvenile detention. The FY 22 budget should include:

- **At least $5M to expand access to Career and Technical Education (CTE), College and High School Equivalency (HSE), and Vocational Programs for students in juvenile detention** so that youth can return to the community better prepared to engage in secondary or higher education, vocational programs, and employment. Since implementation of Raise the Age legislation, the average age of students attending Passages Academy—the NYC public school for students in juvenile detention—has risen, but the programming offered to young people in detention has not matched the rise in age. Many young people with court involvement are interested in obtaining a high school diploma or HSE equivalency diploma, job training, and employment opportunities. The DOE runs

several successful programs in schools in the community, such as Co-op Tech and Pathways to Graduation (P2G), that provide students with CTE courses, state-approved pre-apprenticeship programs in the trades, pre-HSE and HSE courses and testing, a wide array of high school courses, and/or college credits. However, these programs are not typically accessible to students in juvenile detention. The City should invest in the expansion or replication of these programs in Passages Academy so that youth can gain marketable skills and return to the community prepared to engage in high school or HSE programs, vocational programs, higher education, or employment.

In addition to our priorities within the Department of Education's budget, we join with our coalition partners in calling on the Administration to baseline **$20M for Fair Futures** to continue the 1:1 coaching and tutoring that is vital to the academic success of young people in foster care.

We appreciate the City Council's hard work to make key investments to support students over the past several years and look forward to working with you to ensure the final FY 22 education budget paves the way to hope and opportunity for this generation of students. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Katherine Hoy, LMSW
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Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Finance

Re: Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget
May 25th, 2021

Good afternoon, Chair Dromm and members of the Committee on Finance. My name is Kate Hoy and I live in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. I am the Director of Advocacy Services at AHRC New York City. AHRC NYC is a family governed organization, and one of the first and largest social service agencies in the country serving individuals with disabilities and their families. I am here today on behalf of the 250+ families, students and professionals I work with each year in my capacity as an education advocate, and in solidarity with the ARISE Coalition, of which I am proud member.

The city cannot wait until 2023 to fund preschool special education program seats and it must commit this year to salary parity for its 4410 preschool special education teachers.

Preschool special education teachers require more training and must attain the same level of certification as other special education providers. Yet they are paid much less—often tens of thousands of dollars less—while required to do much more for their students. The Dept. of Education's own policy guidance says it best:

> Preschool children in special classes receive IEP recommendations and program placement from their local Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE). Children in special classes have considerable educational needs, which require a comprehensive special education program to meet their IEP goals. These children require more adult support, attention, direction, and supervision than is typical in general education settings to benefit from the instructional program. [i]

Please note—parents do not choose the program that their child attends. These children, **our New York City children,** are placed by CPSE staff—and soon by a centralized enrollment office—into an appropriate special education program that can meet the child's IEP mandate. While a program

may be appropriate, it cannot be equitable if its teachers are paid significantly less to educate children with the most significant disabilities.

I urge you to fund salary parity for preschool special education teachers for Fiscal Year 2022. We cannot delay. Our children cannot--will not--wait. We will all remember the choices made when it mattered most and when our elected leaders had it within their power to change our children's future for the better. Please commit to preschool special education salary parity now.

Thank you very much to Chair Dromm and to the committee for your time today.

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[i] https://infohubstg.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/special-class-policies-and-ops

**Committee on Finance**
**May 2021**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Phoebe Flaherty, I'm an Organizer at ALIGN: The Alliance for a Greater New York. ALIGN is a community-labor coalition dedicated to creating good jobs, vibrant communities, and an accountable democracy for all New Yorkers.

We coordinate the Climate Works for All coalition and the Transform Dont Trash Coalition, the coalitions that led the organizing to pass Local Law 97 the Dirty Buildings bill and Local Law 199 Commercial Waste Zones.

We are still in the midst of this pandemic, and New York's Black and brown and environmental justice communities are bearing the brunt of the impact of the virus and the economic downturn. We're seeing record high unemployment, concentrated in BIPOC and environmental justice communities.

**Our City's budget must prioritize investment and job creation for the communities that have been hit the hardest by this pandemic.**

The Climate Works for All coalition created an Equitable Recovery Report, a roadmap to creating 100,000 good green jobs for New York City's Black and brown communities and moving us out of the pandemic and recession towards our climate goals by investing 16 billion dollars over 3 years. This is the comprehensive plan we need to move our city through crisis and towards equity and climate justice.

We know that the city is still reeling from the crisis, and we have developed interim Climate budget priorities that will lead us on the same path towards investment in communities and green job creation, right now within this years budget.

**Within the City's 2022 budget, we are calling for an investment of 80 million to retrofit public schools and 100 million to install solar on public schools.**

In April 2018, New York City passed Local Law 97 (LL 97), a law that puts a cap on greenhouse gas emissions for buildings larger than 25,000 square feet. To ensure the spirit of the law is upheld by the private sector and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030, New York City government must lead by example and retrofit public buildings with the urgency the issue deserves. The CW4A coalitions' budget request specifically focuses on K-12 schools, which make up a large portion of public buildings that are currently emitting at rates above LL 97 emission caps.

Based on public data from 2019 on energy and water usage for large buildings and the Coalition's analysis, over 2,400 city-owned buildings are currently emitting at levels higher than the emissions cap for the 2030 - 2034 LL 97 compliance period. The buildings are dispersed throughout the city and comprise various building types including K-12 schools, government offices, maintenance and repair for government equipment, police stations, and fire stations, among other uses.

**As of 2019, 1,132 K-12 schools, which add up to a total of 143,869,137 square feet, are emitting at levels beyond LL 97's 2030 - 2034 period of compliance. At an average cost of $7.55 per square foot to retrofit buildings, the city would need over $1.08 billion throughout the next 13 years to meet LL97 emission targets. That is, the City needs about $80 million every year to retrofit schools.**

Given the known associations between atmospheric pollution and climate change, and the correlation between air pollution and mortality rates for respiratory diseases like COVID-19, retrofitting buildings, particularly Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems, serves as a common solution to two of the most urgent problems New Yorkers have faced in the last few decades—a pandemic and climate change. In addition, **research shows that these building retrofits will create 482 good union jobs during a time of economic crisis.** Protecting children, teachers, public servants, and the public at large who utilize these buildings, while stimulating jobs for New Yorkers, should be of utmost importance in 2021.

**In 2014, New York City committed to installing 100 megawatts of solar energy on public buildings by 2025. In order to achieve this goal, solar panels would need to be installed on over 300 public buildings over the following decade, a move that could be replicated on the other 4,000 city-owned and leased properties throughout New York City. It is integral that the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), the agency charged with the city's solar implementation, prioritize its solar program.a**
**An immediate investment of $100 million toward DCAS' solar program will provide the capacity and resources the agency needs to swiftly meet New York City's 2025 solar goals.**

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The New York City Department of Education's (DOE) building stock presents an opportunity for the City to make significant progress toward its solar goals. Not only do K-12 schools hold a large share of New York City's new solar energy capacity, they also account for one-quarter of all City-owned buildings. In fact, the DOE hosts more than half of the City's completed installations. Following the passage of the Climate Mobilization Act, DCAS and the New York Power Authority (NYPA) announced their plans to install up to 16 additional megawatts of solar energy at forty-six New York City public schools. While this announcement is a good step, DCAS must prioritize an expeditious implementation of its solar program in environmental justice communities to ensure the city meets its 2025 solar goals.

Since 2014 DCAS has installed solar panels on 30 school buildings across the city, amounting to only 6.86 megawatts of solar energy. That means DCAS has installed an average of 1 megawatt per year. There are still 189 other school sites waiting to be completed that have the potential to reduce the City's emissions by another 10,449 metric tons of CO2. **At completion, the savings from these sites will be equivalent to taking 2,257 cars off the streets for one year**. As DCAS continues to implement its solar program, it is critical that the agency utilizes social equity criteria to determine the order in which solar panels should be installed. As the largest school district in the country, there is an immense opportunity for New York City to create an implementation standard that can be replicated in other municipalities. Only taking technical considerations into account, such as solar-ready roofs, fails to recognize systemic inequalities in New York City. By prioritizing K-12 schools in environmental justice communities, the City will be building more resilient neighborhoods and ensure the benefits of renewable energy reach its most impacted New Yorkers.

Solar projects will not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but will also allow New York City to use investments to mitigate deep socio-economic and environmental inequalities in our city. New Yorkers had first-hand experiences of the catastrophic impacts of climate change through Hurricane Sandy. Now, these cumulative environmental risks have further intensified under the COVID-19 pandemic. Building energy generation technology in environmental justice communities is essential, especially as New York looks towards a Just Recovery from the current public health and economic crises. Investments in green infrastructure will build more resilient neighborhoods and bring good, well-paying jobs back into communities that need it most. Research shows economic activity on green infrastructure generates both direct and indirect jobs. **Research shows an investment of $100 million into installing solar on**

**schools will create 508 direct and indirect jobs.** The siting of solar on K-12 schools coupled with building retrofits, a local hiring program, and strong project labor agreements, can expand access to career-track jobs and create an avenue for addressing environmental injustice.

**In addition to retrofitting and installing solar on public schools, Climate Works for All is calling for an investment in the following areas as well, totaling an investment of $200 million.**

17 millions towards public waste management, including 4 million to staff the Commercial Waste Zones program, and 13 million towards expanding the composting program.

3 million towards clean transportation expansions via electric school buses

We were pleased to see these waste and electric school buses budget items reflected in the Mayor's executive budget and hope to see them within the final budget for FY2022.

These total investments are what is necessary to invest in New York's BIPOC and frontline Environmental Justice communities, address the inequities of the pandemic and move us out of the COVID crisis while addressing the climate crisis. We believe these investments will move us forward on the path towards an Equitable Recovery.

Thank you for your time and consideration today.

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Testimony of the American Heart Association

Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance

May 25, 2021

Robin Vitale, Vice President of Health
Greg Mihailovich, Community Advocacy Director
American Heart Association, New York City

Thank you, Chair Dromm, and the members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance. On behalf of the volunteers of the American Heart Association, we are grateful for the opportunity to present testimony related to key health initiatives that our organization believes will support healthy behaviors in New Yorkers.

As the nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke, of which approximately 80% of diagnoses are preventable[1], we believe every person deserves the opportunity for a full, healthy life. As champions for health equity, by 2024, the American Heart Association will advance cardiovascular health for all, including identifying and removing barriers to good health. In a world forever-changed by COVID-19, our mission – *to be a relentless force for a world of healthier, longer lives* – is more important than ever.

As the New York City Council moves to finalize next year's budget, we ask that you remain vigilant in supporting policies that ensure New Yorkers – particularly those most in need – can protect and promote their own health in the aftermath of COVID-19. With the release of the $98.6 billion Executive Budget for FY22, NYC seems prepared to invest in our city's recovery. We ask you to prioritize key health programs that will help the people who need it the most.

## Reducing Food Insecurity

Every family should have access to the foods that help support a balanced diet and a healthier life. Unfortunately, nearly 1.6 million New Yorkers - one in five - are facing food insecurity.[2] That includes school children, seniors, parents, and working adults.[3] The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps reduce food insecurity

[1] "Preventable Deaths from Heart Disease & Stroke." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 3 Sept. 2013, www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/HeartDisease-Stroke/index.html.
[2] NYC Mayor's Office of Food Policy. (2021). Food Forward NYC: A 10-Year Food Policy Plan. https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/foodpolicy/downloads/pdf/Food-Forward-NYC.pdf
[3] Ibid.

and help households rise out of poverty.[4] SNAP healthy food incentive programs can help people eat more fruits and vegetables and increase the quality of their diet.[5] Higher intakes of fruit and vegetables – at least 2 daily servings of fruit and 3 daily servings of vegetables – have been associated with lower mortality.[6]

When SNAP recipients are given incentives to buy more fruits and vegetables, they spend more of their benefits on healthier foods.[7] Families can buy healthier options, which help children establish lifelong habits supporting overall health and wellness.[8] SNAP incentives can increase spending on fruits and vegetables in grocery stores, which generates economic growth. Every $5 spent using SNAP generates as much as $9 in economic activity.

New York City's existing SNAP incentive programs help people eat more fruits and vegetables and increase the quality of their diet, but they are limited and do not reach everyone who would benefit from them:

> Health Bucks offers SNAP recipients a voucher to increase the buying power of SNAP benefits used at participating farmers markets. Previously offering a $2 voucher for every $5 spent, this year the match is increasing to a $2 voucher for every $2 spent, up to $10 a day. This increase will greatly help food insecure New Yorkers, but not everyone has convenient access to a farmers market and most locations are seasonal and closed for a good part of the year.
>
> Get the Good Stuff offers a matching dollar in reward points for every dollar of SNAP spent on purchases of eligible fruits, vegetables, and beans at participating supermarkets – up to $50 per day. Those points can be used for the next purchase of eligible produce. Currently, there are only six supermarkets participating in the program but there are plans for expanding to 14 supermarkets this year.
>
> Pharmacy to Farm provides $30 in Health Bucks each month to SNAP recipients who fill a prescription for high blood pressure medication at select pharmacies. The Health Bucks can be used to purchase fresh produce at participating farmers markets. The federal funding supporting this initiative is expiring and NYC is winding this program down.

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[4] Renwick, Trudi, Fox, Liana. The Supplemental Poverty Measure. Prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-258.html.

[5] Bartlett, Susan, Jacob Klerman, Lauren Olsho, et al. Evaluation of the Healthy Incentives Pilot (HIP): Final Report. Prepared by Abt Associates for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, September 2014.

[6] Wang, D. D., Li, Y., Bhupathiraju, S. N., Rosner, B. A., Sun, Q., Giovannucci, E. L., . . . Hu, F. B. (2021). Fruit and vegetable intake and MORTALITY: Results from 2 prospective cohort studies of us men and women and a meta-analysis of 26 cohort studies. Circulation. doi:10.1161/circulationaha.120.048996

[7] Ibid.

[8] Hilary Hoynes, Diane Schanzenbach, Douglas Almond, "Long-Run Impacts of Childhood Access to the Safety Net," American Economic Review 106, no. 4 (2016): 903-34.

NYC recently announced that they would match $5.5 million in federal funding for a total investment of $11 million dollars in Health Bucks and Get the Good Stuff.[9] This is a good first step but, to put it in perspective, $11 million would provide an additional $5 per month for 185,000 SNAP recipients. SNAP serves nearly 1.5 million New York City residents, or 20 percent of the population, on average each month[10] so there are still many more New Yorkers that are in need. We ask that NYC double its contribution to $11M, for a total $16.5M investment in expanding Health Bucks and Get the Good Stuff, as well as keeping Pharmacy to Farm in operation. Expanding the reach and impact of these effective initiatives will have significant long-term health and economic benefits for New York City.

Hypertension management and remote care

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is a key risk factor for heart disease and stroke and often there are no obvious symptoms to indicate something is wrong. As of 2019, 2.5 million adults, or 31% of New Yorkers,[11] report having high blood pressure.[12] That is ten times the capacity of Yankee, Citi Field, MetLife, and Dodger stadiums combined. Only 47% of those diagnosed with high blood pressure are under control.[13] The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) has undertaken a significant effort to promote awareness, clinical guidelines and treatment adherence called *Take the Pressure Off, NYC*. The program's goal was to reduce the number of New Yorkers with raised blood pressure by 150,000 by 2022 and NYC placed 300 blood pressure kiosks around the city for public use. The world has changed a lot since then.

Those with heart disease, including high blood pressure and congenital heart defects, may face an increased risk for complications if they become infected with the COVID-19 virus. People with diabetes, compromised immune systems, chronic lung diseases and other underlying conditions also may be at risk of more severe illness, according to the CDC.[14] High blood pressure also accelerates memory loss and other cognitive declines for middle-aged or older adults, even when it only goes up slightly and for a short time, new research shows. Conversely, controlling high blood pressure slows the speed of cognitive decline.[15]

[9] Good Health, Good Value: NYC receives $5.5 million grant to make healthy food more affordable to New Yorkers. (n.d.). Retrieved March 22, 2021, from https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/about/press/pr2021/good-health-good-value-nyc-receives-grant-for-affordable-healthy-food.page

[10] NYC Mayor's Office of Food Policy. (2020). Food Metrics Report 2020. https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/foodpolicy/downloads/pdf/food_metrics_report_2020-two_page_spread.pdf

[11] City of New York. (2017, February 2). 2020 population. Retrieved October 2020, from https://data.cityofnewyork.us/City Government/2020 population/t8c6 3i7b

[12] New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. (2017, November). Epi Data Brief, No. 95. Retrieved October 2020, from https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/epi/databrief95.pdf

[13] Angell, S. Y., Garg, R. K., Gwynn, R. C., Bash, L., Thorpe, L. E., & Frieden, T. R. (2008, September). Prevalence, Awareness, Treatment, and Predictors of Control of Hypertension in New York City. Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes, 1 (1), 46 53.

[14] Centers for Disease control and Prevention. (n.d.). Retrieved February 16, 2021, from https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/groups-at-higher-risk.html

[15] De Menezes, S. T., Giatti, L., Brant, L. C., Griep, R. H., Schmidt, M. I., Duncan, B. B., . . . Barreto, S. M. (2021). Hypertension, Prehypertension, and Hypertension Control. Hypertension, 77(2), 672-681. doi:10.1161/hypertensionaha.120.16080

Telehealth, also called telemedicine, is the use of electronic information and telecommunication technologies to provide care when the patient and the doctor are not at the same location.[16] Telehealth increases access healthcare to those who ordinarily lack it, increases medication adherence protocol, and allows patients to be monitored and treated continuously within the comfort and privacy of their own home.

Telehealth may increase access and convenience for cardiovascular disease and stroke patients. This is especially true for vulnerable cardiovascular disease or stroke patients who – because of their geographical location, physical disability, advanced chronic disease, or difficulty with securing transportation – may not otherwise access specialty health care services.

With millions of New Yorkers staying home due to fears of being exposed to COVID-19, many have turned to telehealth to meet their medical needs. Unfortunately, there are numerous barriers to the adoption of telehealth. The lack of equitable public and private insurance reimbursement and the lack of multi-state licensure disproportionately deny high quality healthcare to vulnerable populations that lack access to traditional healthcare.[17] Many New Yorkers also face additional barriers to accessing telehealth. If someone is living on a fixed income, they may not have the financial resources to afford devices or internet service fees. They may not know how to use the technology and lack the assistance to learn. People with hearing loss, impaired vision, or language barriers will struggle even more.

These barriers underscore the importance of access to self-monitoring devices. Just like having a thermometer will help someone tell if they have a fever or are just feeling flushed, access to blood pressure cuffs helps someone determine whether need to seek in-person care if they are feeling unwell. This is especially important if that person struggles with accessing telehealth services.

Self-measured blood pressure (BP) monitoring, the measurement of BP by an individual outside of the office at home, is a validated approach for out-of-office BP measurement. Several national and international hypertension guidelines endorse self-measured BP monitoring, which has high potential for improving the diagnosis and management of hypertension in the United States. However, to adequately address barriers to the implementation of self-measured BP monitoring, financial investment is needed.[18]

NYC should increase funding to its hypertension program to support increased education and outreach, as well as support self-measuring of blood pressure at home

[16] What is telehealth? (n.d.). Retrieved February 16, 2021, from https://telehealth.hhs.gov/patients/understanding-telehealth/

[17] Schwamm LH, Chumbler N, Brown E, Fonarow GC, Berube D, Nystrom K, Suter R, Zavala M, Polsky D, Radhakrishnan K, Lacktman N, Horton K, Malcarney MB, Halamka J, Tiner AC; on behalf of the American Heart Association Advocacy Coordinating Committee. Recommendations for the implementation of telehealth in cardiovascular and stroke care: a policy statement from the American Heart Association [published online ahead of print December 20, 2016]. Circulation. doi: 10.1161/CIR.0000000000000475.

[18] Shimbo D, Artinian NT, Basile JN, Krakoff LR, Margolis KL, Rakotz MK, Wozniak G; on behalf of the American Heart Association and the American Medical Association. Self-measured blood pressure monitoring at home: a joint policy statement from the American Heart Association and American Medical Association. Circulation. 2020;141: e•••–e••• doi: 10.1161/CIR.0000000000000803.

by investing in blood pressure cuffs to provide to community partners (FQHCs, Health Systems, other clinics, CBOs) for distribution to those who do not have access to them.

We ask the NYC Council to dedicate an additional $1 million for NYC's hypertension program to provide increased support for New Yorkers struggling with high blood pressure.

Tobacco Cessation

Smoking is a key risk factor for premature death from heart disease and stroke.[19] Smoking e-cigarettes daily doubles the risk of heart attack. When combined with daily cigarette use, heart attack risk rises five-fold.[20] According to the World Health Organization, smokers are likely more vulnerable to severe and potentially life-threatening cases of COVID-19. Smokers often suffer from lung disease and reduced lung capacity, which would greatly increase the risk of serious complications from COVID-19 infection. While there is currently no direct data about the role of vaping in COVID-19 infection or outcomes, a growing body of evidence shows that vaping can harm the health of your lungs. While more research is needed, limited evidence suggests that using e-cigarettes may suppress your immune system, making you more susceptible to respiratory infections and delayed recovery.

The growing evidence around tobacco and e-cigarette use and adverse outcomes from COVID-19 has strengthened the American Heart Association's position that we need New Yorkers to quit their addiction as urgently as possible. Despite recent progress, 13.4% of New York City residents (886,000 adults)[21] still smoke. More than 200,000 children are still exposed to secondhand smoke at home.[22] With the enactment of the city law banning all flavored e-cigarettes – hopefully to be soon followed by companion legislation restrict access to all flavored tobacco products, including menthol – New York City needs to invest in more cessation programs and support for those now struggling with a nicotine addiction because of heavy e-cigarette use.

More than two thirds of New York City smokers try to quit every year. The rates of quit attempts were highest for African Americans and Hispanics. With the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) implementing its Smoke-Free Public Housing Rule,[23] public housing residents who are struggling with a nicotine addiction could potentially lose their homes if they are unable to quit.

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[19] New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. (2017, November 20). New Data Show Striking Disparities in Early Deaths from Heart Disease and Stroke. Retrieved October 2020, from https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/about/press/pr2017/pr090 17.page

[20] Harvard Health Publishing. (2019, January). E cigarettes boost the risk of heart attack. Retrieved October 2020, from https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart health/e cigarettes boost the risk of heart attack

[21] Public Health Solutions. (2020). NYC Smoke Free. Smoking Statistics. Retrieved October 2020, from https://nycsmokefree.org/resources/smoking statistics/

[22] Truth Initiative. (2019, March 5). Facts About Women And Tobacco. Retrieved October 2020, from https://truthinitiative.org/research resources/targeted communities/facts about women and tobacco

[23] Smoke-Free public Housing: HUD.gov / U.S. Department of housing and urban Development (HUD). (n.d.). Retrieved May 17, 2021, from https://www.hud.gov/smokefreepublichousing

Receiving assistance with quitting from a health care provider doubles the chances that a smoker will quit. Investing in smoking prevention and cessation programs results in reduced health expenditures and better long-term health outcomes. Let's make sure all New Yorkers are getting the help they need to stop smoking.

We ask the NYC Council to invest an additional $1 million in NYC's smoking prevention and cessation programs to help New Yorkers live tobacco-free lives.

Thank you for everything you have done and will do to protect the lives of the people of New York City. The American Heart Association is a reliable and trusted source of information based in credible science, and we will continue to be your partner in ensuring the health and well-being of all New Yorkers.

Academy of Medical and Public Health Services

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**Testimony on the New York City Fiscal Year 2022 Budget to the Finance Committee**

**May 25, 2021**

**Mon Yuck Yu**

Good Afternoon. My name is Mon Yuck Yu, Executive Vice President & Chief of Staff at the Academy of Medical & Public Health Services (AMPHS). Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

AMPHS is a not-for-profit healthcare organization in Sunset Park that works to bridge the health equity gap among communities of color by providing direct health services like clinical screenings and bilingual mental health therapy; individualized health education; and social services to Latino and Chinese immigrant populations, free of cost and regardless of immigration status. We work primarily with undocumented immigrants who suffer high risks of chronic, infectious, and behavioral health issues due to their lack of health insurance access, offering wraparound services that address social determinants of health. 83.3% of people in our Sunset Park community are low English proficient. We are also a member of the 15% & Growing Campaign, a collective that unites over 50 over 50 Asian-led and serving organizations across New York City to fight for a fair and equitable budget that protects the needs of our most vulnerable community members.

**Immigrant Mental Health Initiative & Adult Literacy Initiative**

Ms. Wong is an ESOL student who initially came to us for help with her daughter's behavioral issues. She was undocumented and unemployed, did not speak English, and did not qualify for insurance. Because of a tenuous relationship with her daughter and the isolation experienced from being undocumented, she had been contemplating ending her life. Our team counseled her, helped her get connected to in-language family therapy services in Chinese, as well as NYC Well. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have provided Ms. Wong's family with weekly food deliveries and she is one of the 250 families that received cash assistance from the $150,000 that we have distributed to date. She is attending our Adult Literacy classes weekly, which besides serving as an educational space, has become a space for solidarity and support. Our Chinese-speaking Community Health Worker checks in and offers health coaching to her.

During COVID-19, our work has become more important than ever before, reaching over 400,000 people through our outreach and education efforts. Our Community Health Workers offer interpretation in Spanish, Arabic, and three Chinese dialects to help community members navigate our healthcare and social systems. Every month, we are holding in-language workshops and distributing thousands of pieces of literature to community members and over 100,000 pieces of PPE; from February to April, we were helping 250-300 people make appointments for COVID-19 vaccination sites weekly in their language. Every week, our team distributes 7,500 lbs of food to families struggling with food insecurity. We are helping community members navigate accessing unemployment and rental arrears assistance through systems that are complicated and often not available in other languages.

We would like to thank the City Council for its support of the Immigrant Mental Health Initiative and Adult Literacy Initiative, which has helped support these critical COVID-19 responses and existing services. I would like to urge the City Council to restore funding for both initiatives, which was cut by 15% in FY21, and in particular advocate for restoring state Article VI funds, which have been cut from 20% to 10%. Cuts to funding over the past year have been detrimental, while demand for services have tripled; many of our staff are stretched thin and unfortunately we have not been able to hire new staff to meet the demand.

We also urge the City to restore and baseline the $12 million in Adult Literacy funding and expand the Digital Inclusion and Literacy Initiative. During the pandemic, our adult literacy classes have served as a lifeline for community members during the pandemic, to not only secure the language skills necessary but as a platform for COVID-19 information and resource dissemination, as a community in solidarity, and as a source for mental health support. This year, loaned devices to community members that could not afford internet access for their classes, which dipped into our reserves due to our funding cuts in Adult Literacy programming. Seeing a need for new knowledge in technology, we have integrated digital literacy classes into our adult literacy curricula, but this is not enough without focused funding given that the majority of the programming and benefits applications are now done in a virtual space.

**Recovery and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers Initiative**

Today, I am also here to request your support for a $4 million investment in the "Recovery and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers" citywide initiative to support social services by Asian American-led and -serving community-based organizations to address the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes and disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and lay the groundwork for longterm healing for APA New Yorkers. The Asian community has been hit particularly hard by the pandemic, from a social, economic and mental health perspective.

What has been a mental health stressor in the past has now been exacerbated. Unemployment and lack of work has created financial hurdles and fear of eviction. Families with a history of domestic violence are now facing more tension. Community

members experience heightened levels of anxiety and depression with the loss of loved ones and financial stability.

Layered upon the fears and anxieties of COVID-19, our Asian community members are now faced with the fear of being attacked, brutalized, and spat on simply because of our race. My grandmother is 100 years old and lived through WWII, raising seven children. My mother, 73, raised me as a single parent. They are the most powerful women I know and taught me the values I live by every day -- love and respect for your neighbor. But I fear for their lives every day. My 8-year-old niece is asking her parents why other classmates are calling her a virus, but they don't know how to explain this to her. They are afraid that she will be bullied when she returns to school. Hate crimes against Asians have increased 1900% across the city, with over 3,8000 incidents of anti-Asian violence in the past year. Our community members feel the stress of racism and harassment every day when they ride the subway or walk on the streets, and anxieties will increase if events like the Atlanta shootings and anti-Asian attacks on NYC streets continue to occur.

We have a waiting list of nearly 100 individuals seeking support from our free mental health services in both Chinese and Spanish, which we cannot meet by our current funding levels. We are one of few organizations offering bilingual therapy services and the need is high; funding cuts this past year has meant that we were not able to fund two of our therapist positions and is limiting our ability to conduct outreach to address the mental health stigma. Currently, initiatives like the Mental Health for Vulnerable Populations Initiative only supports mental health services in one Asian-serving organization and we, in addition to a number of other organizations doing this work, have not been funded.

We also need to institute measures to protect our most vulnerable community members from continued attacks. The Recovery and Healing Initiative will not only fund critical mental health services, but also provide funding to help us expand social services for this population, offer bystander intervention and self-defense workshops, provide support services for vulnerable seniors and women who are impacted by this increased violence, and create a community business safe haven program to protect our communities from attacks.

Despite the fact that the Asian Pacific Americans comprise over 15% and are the fastest growing population in New York City, Asian-led and serving organizations like ours remain historically underfunded and received only 4.65% of City Council discretionary dollars and less than 1.5% of social service contract dollars in FY 2021. This is the most critical time for us to step up and support those who are most vulnerable.

**Food Pantry Initiative**

Additionally, the NYC Council must restore $5.659 million for emergency food pantries that CBOs like AMPHS have stood up during the pandemic, which feeds over 1,500 residents every week through donated food boxes, a mobile hot food unit and food deliveries for homebound individuals that is completely unfunded at this time. We need

culturally-sensitive produce and staples that our communities feel comfortable eating that can only be met by CBOs that know their communities best. This is not getting met by the GetFood program, which often delivers food that does not meet dietary requirements and is not culturally-appropriate. Many undocumented community members also feel uncomfortable giving their information to government-run programs.

**Pandemic Response Institute**

Finally, COVID-19 has demonstrated the need for a coordinated, community-led response that elevates community voices and involves traditional and non-traditional players in longer term public health planning to prepare for future emergencies. With the City allocating $20 million in funding to start the Pandemic Response Institute (PRI), funding must be allocated to involve grassroots community-based organizations, many which have been left out of planning conversations, and risk once again leaving out immigrant communities from this response. We are disappointed to learn that funding to the PRI, run primarily by EDC, only supports capital funds that by design, preclude smaller CBOs from obtaining the sustainable, operational planning support needed to sustain outreach and education programs that should be a core part of this Institute. We have had success in developing emergency response initiatives in partnership with NYC Emergency Management, and urge the City Council to consider supporting initiatives, especially in TRIE neighborhoods, to enable emergency response teams to sustain their work, which COADs and VOADs are currently administering without the proper support.

We are here for our communities, and we ask that you be here for us to make our work possible. I humbly thank the City Council for supporting organizations like AMPHS working on providing on-the-ground, culturally-competent services during this challenging time. We look forward to working together to protect our communities and support them to heal and recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development

**TESTIMONY OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR NEIGHBORHOOD AND HOUSING DEVELOPMENT TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

RE: FY 2022 EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING AS RELATED TO
NYC DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

May 25, 2021

## About the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development

Eight grassroots, local housing groups established the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD) in 1974 to support the development and preservation of affordable housing in New York City. Today, ANHD stands as one of the City's lead policy, advocacy, and technical assistance and capacity-building organizations. We maintain a membership of 80+ neighborhood-based and city-wide not-for-profit organizations that have affordable housing and/or equitable economic development as a central component of their mission. We are an essential citywide voice, bridging the power and impact of our member groups to build community power and ensure the right to affordable housing and thriving, equitable neighborhoods for all New Yorkers. We value justice, equity and opportunity, and we believe in the importance of movement building that centers marginalized communities in our work.

ANHD's work directly supports the needs of our members who develop, manage, and organize to preserve affordable housing, and who fight to bring equity into low-wealth communities in New York City—especially, black and brown communities. Our groups rely on us for technical assistance and capacity-building resources that allow them to maximize their resources, skills and impact. The support services, research, analysis, public education and coalition building we do helps to identify patterns of local neighborhood experiences and uplift citywide priorities and needs. Our work translates into the capacity to win new programs, policies and systems that ensure the creation and preservation of deeply and permanently affordable housing, and economic justice.

## HPD Capital Budget

***We are asking the Council to maintain the full restoration of HPD's capital budget as is written in the FY2022 Executive Budget.***

ANHD and our members work very closely with the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to develop much-needed affordable and supportive housing here in New York City, and we know that the agency is absolutely integral in advancing NYC's housing goals. **We are pleased to see that the FY2022 Executive Budget restores HPD's capital budget despite previously projected cuts as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.** The restoration of HPD's capital budget means ANHD's members can continue building hundreds of units of affordable, senior and supportive housing at a time when New Yorkers need it most.

Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development

## HPD Staffing

***We are asking the Council to ensure sufficient resources for HPD to fill all staff vacancies and retain existing staff so that the agency is prepared to utilize the federal COVID-19 recovery resources coming to NYC and minimize any delays in the housing development pipeline.***

Capital dollars are one side of the equation; it is also critically important that we invest in our HPD workforce whose job it is to get those capital funds out the door and into the new construction and preservation projects that will serve our City's residents. Especially with substantial federal funds coming to HPD to support the COVID-19 recovery – under the HOME and Section 8 programs and likely in additional infrastructure funds in the coming months – it is even more important that there is sufficient staff at HPD to carry out housing development projects. Every department at HPD, from development and legal to marketing and code enforcement, is integral in carrying out housing development work and ensuring we stay on track to meet our housing goals and adequately address the housing crisis.

**We applaud the work and collaboration of HPD Commissioner Louise Carroll and the Office of Management and Budget to lift the hiring freeze at HPD and move from a 3:1 hiring ratio to a 2:1.** ANHD, as a close partner of HPD, would like to lift up and emphasize the importance of preserving and restoring HPD staff capacity. However, we urge OMB to go further and restore a 1:1 hiring ratio for HPD, so that new staff can be hired for every person who leaves, as well as implement an expedited hiring process to fill vacancies. With vacancies currently between 20-35% in HPD departments, there is a need to make sure new staff can be hired as soon as possible, and to support HPD with adequate resources to sufficiently train new staff and retain current staff.

The consequences of not investing in our City's workforce are significant. Insufficient staffing at HPD will lead to a slow down of the HPD affordable, supportive and senior housing development pipeline. This means project delays and missed real estate opportunities, much-needed units delayed or sitting empty, and possibly missing our housing goals and targets. Furthermore, insufficient staffing means reduced capacity to utilize the substantial federal resources coming in for COVID-19 recovery, including the additional 8,000 Section 8 vouchers allocated to NYC. Especially with a new Mayor coming in this fiscal year, it is crucial that we avoid disruptions to the housing pipeline and maximize the work that HPD does.

**We know that HPD staff have worked tirelessly over the past year and a half to respond to an unprecedented crisis, and we applaud them for their work and for their commitment to staying on track to achieve NYC's housing goals despite the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.** ANHD urges the City Council to support HPD in making sure they have the staff needed to achieve the City's commitment to building thousands of affordable and supportive housing units to address the housing crisis.

Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development

## NYC Budget Justice

Over the past year and a half the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated nearly every measure of inequity in New York City. ANHD continues to advocate for a budget that reflects and prioritizes the needs of NYC's BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color), immigrant, and other marginalized communities.

New York City's recovery from COVID-19, and in particular the disproportionate impact on BIPOC New Yorkers, cannot come on the backs of the communities that are most in need. As the City begins to reopen, we must stay focused on the millions of NYC residents and communities that face eviction, foreclosure, homelessness, food insecurity, un- or under-employment, physical and mental health conditions, small business closures, and violence.

Cutting critical services while maintaining the bloated NYPD budget creates yet another layer of unfairness in the City's response to this pandemic. At a time of unprecedented need coupled with a historic uprising against white supremacy, hate crimes and police violence, it is unjust for the City to prioritize funding for the NYPD over its communities.

We should be increasing investments in community-based organizations and the services and advocacy they provide. **We stand with our allies and partners and call on the Mayor and NYC Council to deliver budget justice – by reallocating part of the ballooning NYPD budget to invest in core services and supports to communities instead.**

*Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. For more information contact Eliot Hetterly at eliot.h@anhd.org*

SAPNANYC

**New York City Council Finance Committee**
**May 25, 2021**

**Written Testimony of Diya Basu-Sen**
**Executive Director, Sapna NYC**

Thank you to Chair Dromm and the Finance Committee for the opportunity to give testimony. As the Executive Director of Sapna NYC, I am testifying on behalf of our South Asian community as well as the 15% & Growing Campaign that unites 50+ Asian-led and serving organizations across New York City. Sapna NYC is the only CBO in the Bronx that offers linguistically accessible and culturally attuned programming and services to the pan-South Asian community in Bangla, Hindi, and Urdu. We provide health and empowerment programming for South Asian women and families throughout the Bronx as well as in Queens, Brooklyn, and Manhattan.

Throughout the pandemic, APA CBOs have been filling the gap between community needs and City services and outreach. We have been doing essential frontline work, distributing groceries and PPE, making vaccine appointments, counseling victims of anti-Asian and anti-Muslim hate crimes, distributing emergency funds, and much more. Our CBOs are always the first place our communities go to for help because they simply cannot get the same culturally competent, linguistically accessible services anywhere else, but at the same time they remain historically under-funded. APAs represent over 15% of the population and are the fastest growing group in New York City, yet our CBOs receive less than 5% of City Council discretionary dollars and less than 1.5% of social service contract dollars. We saw how year after year of disinvestment in communities of color led to disproportionate health and economic impacts in this pandemic and we are calling on the City to ensure that those same mistakes are not repeated. We need investment in community-based solutions to address the exponential rise in anti-Asian hate we are seeing, but we also need broad investment in our APA CBOs so that they have the capacity to meet the rising needs in our communities.

This past year has been incredibly challenging for our working-class immigrant communities, from high incidence of COVID-19 to skyrocketing unemployment to rising domestic violence. Asian Americans are 2x more likely to test positive for the virus than their white counterparts, yet less likely to be tested at all. Furthermore, the zip codes our communities live in in Queens and the Bronx saw some of the highest incidence of COVID-19. Asian New Yorkers also experienced the largest increase in joblessness of all major racial groups in NYC, with an unemployment rate of 25.6%. Within the community that Sapna NYC serves, this unemployment reached almost 95% over the past year with many community members ineligible or nervous to utilize public benefits. Hate crimes against Asian Americans have spiked by nearly 2000% in New York City. Over a year later our communities are still struggling with impacts of the pandemic as well as with the continuing surge in hate crimes.

Our community knows that if they come to Sapna for help, that there will be someone who can speak to them in their own language, who can not only explain the options, but also work with them to submit applications, follow up on the outcomes as needed, and offer other suggestions of programs or services that they could be eligible for. Low English proficiency coupled with a lack of digital literacy and access means that our community members are particularly vulnerable and that they are most often missed by city outreach campaigns. Furthermore, a long history of discrimination against the Muslim community, makes them question information or services that come from the City unless there is a trusted intermediary like Sapna who can answer questions and address hesitations. In addition, federal and local policies like the Mayors Fund for Undocumented Workers or COVID Rent Relief, created to help communities like ours, often never reach the people they are intended to support unless we do outreach and help with access and submission of paperwork. Throughout the pandemic, policies, health recommendations, and benefits have been changing constantly and mostly overnight, yet by the time the information reaches our community after many translations and interpretations it often is no longer accurate or no longer up to date. Sapna NYC staff is and has been working overtime hours, including nights and weekends because the need is so immense and we are committed to helping our communities, yet we do not have funds to properly compensate them for this extra time. We worked with the community to explain COVID Rent Relief and submit applications. We continue to do vaccine outreach and education and help our community make vaccine appointments. We handed out over 2,000 surgical and reusable masks. We have submitted over 100 applications for everything from SNAP to unemployment.

SAPNANYC

We have distributed over 150,000 pounds of culturally competent groceries including hot meals during the month of Ramadan. We helped over 1,000 New Yorkers complete the 2020 Census. We registered community members to vote and to vote via absentee ballot. We have connected our clients to over $40,000 in emergency assistance to help meet basic needs like food, rent, and medicine.

We are asking New York City Council to create vital initiatives to support culturally competent and language accessible direct service programs to address the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on our APA communities and to invest in community-based solutions to address the exponential rise in anti-Asian hate crimes. We need more affordable and accessible mental health services provided by trusted CBOs. We need more case managers to increase access to much needed benefits. We need more support for survivors. We need a better reporting system for hate crimes. We need in-language health outreach to ensure our communities have accurate COVID-19 information. We need budget equity centering our most vulnerable New Yorkers.

Even prior to the pandemic, being underfunded has led our community-based organizations to experience growing wait lists, rising costs, and inadequate resources to fully support our communities in sustaining vital services. Sapna NYC puts its full support behind the two new and essential initiatives, ***Recovery and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers*** and ***Hope Against Hate,*** that will support APA communities in NYC at this critical moment. With funding from these initiatives, our organizations will be better equipped to help our community meet its basic needs, addressing food and housing insecurity, domestic violence, and mental and physical health. It will also help provide linguistically accessible and culturally competent self-defense and upstander trainings so that our communities feel safer in their daily lives. It will allow us to do outreach on our community of how to report hate crimes and discrimination. It will allow us to increase our capacity for case management work, increase our workforce development programs to help people reenter the workforce, address vaccine hesitancy and access for the hard-to-reach populations, and support our clinical and non-clinical mental health services. We are confident that with City Council's support, our Asian American-led and -serving organizations can finally receive the fair and adequate funding they need to serve our most vulnerable community members as they recover and heal from tragic events of this past year. We call on the City to make the below investments in the APA community:

- ***Recovery and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers*****, a new $4 million citywide initiative** to support social services by Asian American-led and -serving community-based organizations to address the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes and disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our communities, while laying the groundwork for long-term healing for APA New Yorkers. This funding would be split over 50 APA organizations.
- ***Hope Against Hate*****, a new $10 million initiative** funding improving reporting and services for victims of anti-Asian hate, anti-violence upstander trainings, safety ambassador programs, and safe zones throughout NYC.
- **Enhance the Access Health NYC Initiative to $3 Million** that equips organizations to conduct education and outreach among hard-to-reach populations, many of whom remain uninsured in NYC.
- **Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations** - Expand funding for this initiative to ensure more APA-led and serving groups are adequately funded to support those with the highest need. **Sapna NYC is asking for $75,000** to support our linguistically accessible, culturally competent clinical and non-clinical mental health services.
- **Digital Inclusion and Literacy Initiative** - Expand funding for this initiative to ensure that more APA-led and serving groups are adequately funded to support those with the highest need. **Sapna NYC is asking for $10,000** to support our linguistically accessible computer literacy program for South Asian immigrant New Yorkers.

A budget is a moral document that shows who and what we value and too often APAs, immigrants, and communities of color are shown that we matter when it comes to our votes, to holidays and events, but not when it comes to investing real dollars in our communities. Now more than ever, funding APA CBOs like Sapna is essential for our neighborhoods, communities, and businesses to heal and recover and to ensure that we have an equitable recovery from the pandemic.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to working with you to serve the people of New York City.

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Testimony of Elizabeth Carr for New York City Council Committee on Finance
Re: Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget May 25, 2021

Thank you for this opportunity to offer my thoughts about the Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget. My name is Elizabeth Carr and I have worked for 20 years as a literacy and special educator in New York City for the Cooke Institute. I also participate as a member of the ARISE Literacy Committee. I am here to discuss the need to invest in effective reading curriculum and small-group reading support in NYC schools.

Throughout my career, I have worked in some of the neediest schools in NYC. A common denominator among students who failed to progress in literacy was a lack of foundational skills taught in grades K-2 using science based methods and employing a clearly articulated curriculum that built upon previous learning while continuing to augment a young reader's skills. Some readers could succeed without this basis - perhaps because of innate language skills or because of parental intervention. However, the lack of such a curriculum often led to a progressively widening gap in ability between struggling learners and their more adept peers. Soon a year behind in reading became two or more years lagging in literacy performance.

My advocacy on the ARISE Literacy Committee is founded upon the premise that reading proficiency is a great equalizer in society, potentially elevating students of all socio-economic status to success. Moreover, the lack of foundational skills too often culminates in persistent academic failure among high needs children who may also be English Language learners and children of color. Therefore, our most vulnerable students have the most to gain from early skills instruction. But I state the obvious; fortunately, the remedy is equally transparent. I ask for the City Council to allocate $50 million for a new reading curriculum in your response to the budget. I applaud the Mayor's budget proposal for designating $500 million for academic recovery and student supports. To fully realize the impact of such an investment, please require that the final budget include at least $50 million for evidence-based reading curriculum so that teachers have the materials they need to teach students to read in the first place and at least $150 million to provide one-on-one or small-group intervention to students who need more help learning to read from staff who have training in approaches that work. Thank you for your consideration.

ARISE coalition

## Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Finance

## Re: Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget

## May 25, 2021

Good afternoon. I am Maggie Moroff, the Coordinator of the ARISE Coalition. ARISE is a group of more than 100 organizational and individual members who have been working together for the past 13 years to advocate for improved daily experiences and long-term outcomes for New York City's students with disabilities. I am also the Senior Special Education Policy Coordinator at Advocates for Children of New York. I am here today, however, speaking on behalf of ARISE about the need to dedicate funds in FY 2022 for evidence-based literacy supports for all students, compensatory services for students with disabilities, and appropriate specialized placements for preschool students with disabilities who require them. With the DOE receiving historic levels of federal and state funding to help address the educational disruption and trauma students have experienced this past year and a half, this budget offers an opportunity rarely seen to support NYC students, including students with disabilities.

**Literacy supports for all students** – When school staff have access to evidence-based and culturally-relevant reading curricula, and when they themselves have been trained and continue to be supported in the use of those curricula, most of their students, including those with disabilities, can learn to read. Some of those students may require additional, targeted small-group or 1:1 intervention, but the science is clear – they can become readers and literacy, as we all know, opens so many doors otherwise closed. Unfortunately, there are too many students across the City who aren't receiving the reading instruction and intervention they need. In fact, less than half of third through eighth graders, and only 36% of Black and Hispanic students and 16% of students with disabilities in grades 3–8, were reading proficiently in 2019. The Mayor's budget proposal has $500 million in FY 22 for academic recovery and student supports, with no specifics about how this money will be used. The City should ensure that the final budget dedicates at least **$50 million for evidence-based, culturally responsive literacy curricula**, as recommended in the City Council's preliminary budget response, so that teachers have the materials they need to teach students effectively and at least **$150 million to provide targeted one-on-one or small-group reading intervention** to students who need more help learning to read from staff who have training in evidence-based approaches.

**Coordinator: Maggie Moroff -- mmoroff@advocatesforchildren.org**

**Compensatory services** – While we recognize all the work done by the DOE and by those directly supporting students with disabilities this past year, there is no doubt that too many students with IEPs, disproportionately Black, Latinx, and from lower income families, have gone without the critical instruction and special education supports they require to make progress. The DOE must be prepared to provide compensatory services to make up for those lost hours and experiences. The Executive Budget includes $236 million in FY 22 for special education services, including compensatory services, but the DOE has not announced a plan for how they will provide these services, making it difficult to assess this funding level. The City must make public their plan for how they'll determine which students require compensatory special education supports and services, which services students will receive to address all the critical time, support and instruction they haven't received since March of 2020, and how they'll implement those services. There must be **sufficient funds in the FY 2022 budget to ensure all students with disabilities can receive the make-up instruction and services to which they are entitled** without having to file administrative hearings.

**Preschool special education** – Every preschool-aged child who needs a seat in a special education class must have access to those placements. There's currently a significant shortage driven, in part, by the difficulty community-based organizations are having hiring and retaining teachers for preschool special education classes because these teachers were not included in the City's early childhood salary parity agreement. While we appreciate that the Executive Budget includes increased funding for preschool special education, none of the $22M for FY 22 will go to help children with the most intensive needs who require preschool special education classes – and there's no commitment to salary parity for preschool special education teachers, even after FY 22. We urge you to ensure that the final budget includes at least **$85 million** for FY 22, as recommended by the City Council, **to ensure a preschool special education class seat for every child who needs one and provide salary parity to their teachers**.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

**Coordinator: Maggie Moroff -- mmoroff@advocatesforchildren.org**

Amira Mustapha's Testimony- Funding for Arts

Hi,

I am so happy I was given the opportunity to speak at the Hearing on Tuesday. See below for my testimony regarding Art Defined, my bronx-based nonprofit arts organization. I have also added a pdf of the Cultural Plan for Recovery (CPR) incase you are interested. I hope you enjoy you enjoy your week and I look forward to working with my community leaders to strengthen the arts culture in The Bronx.

**"Good Afternoon!**

**My name is Amira Mustapha and I am the founder and executive director of** Art Defined Productions**. We are a bronx-based nonprofit arts organization with the mission to support and create platforms for literary and performing artists living in underserved communities. In the over 10 years we've existed, we have kept our workshops and events free to make our programming accessible to the community. While we enjoy offering these services, it has been a struggle to continue these programs, 5 to 7 them each month, and grow to the extent were we can help fill in the gaps formed by the racial and financial inequalities of The Bronx.**

**We've applied for discretionary funding from a handful of Council-members that lead the communities of the majority we serve; and some initiatives namely the Adult Literacy Initiative, CASA, Digital Inclusion and Literacy Initiative and a few others.**

**That's why it is so important that the Council restore initiative funding, restore and support the DCLA with an addition of $30million.**
**I join my colleagues in supporting the whole $70Million Cultural Plan for Recovery which includes those asks from the Council as well as**
**--baselining the funding for the Coalition of Theaters of Color**
**and an additional $40Million from the administration, to provide equitable support for the hardest hit parts of our sector so we can heal our communities and lead the city's economic recovery.**

**We are confident that with your help,** Art Defined **and similar arts organizations can continue to fulfill our mission.**

**Thank you for you time today."**

Amira Mustapha
Founder and Executive Director
Art Defined Productions
Artdefined.org

## Cultural Plan For Recovery (CPR) - TOTAL ASK: $70M

**New York City's cultural community and those it employs and serves continue to grapple with the economic losses COVID brought. There is no recovery without the arts, and the below package ensures the City invests in this community in an equitable way that best reaches those people, programs, and organizations who need support and can lead the sector forward.**

**$15M** - Cultural Equity Fund created as a way of investing in BIPOC led / BIPOC serving cultural organizations in order to establish better equity in arts and cultural funding. Funding will go to organizations of all sizes to support:

- General operating support for BIPOC led organizations
- Advancement of Anti-racism work - with a priority given to BIPOC-led organizations

This fund begins to undo a history of systemic underfunding of cultural organizations in communities of color - and reflects decades of activism by those organizations via such alliances as the Cultural Equity Group. This Cultural Equity Fund also shows NYC's commitment to the CreateNYC plan by advancing social and racial justice throughout our cultural field. This fund answers the Urgency of Now.

**$30M** - Restoration of funding historically added at Adoption split 50/50 between CIGs and CDF funded program groups with a carve-out for CUNY Corps. This demonstrates a restoration of $20.2M from FY21 and an additional $9.8 investment to bring this funding back to prior levels. Also asking the Council for a full restoration of all initiatives, including the baselining of Coalition Theaters of Color.

**$5M** - Added to DCLA's budget to increase its capacity to support this investment in New York City's arts and cultural community.

**$10M** - Funding for non-profit performing arts, to keep them solvent while they remain shuttered and to support their additional cost when they can reopen. The nonprofit performing arts are uniquely harmed by the pandemic; they were the first to close and will be the last to reopen, and were largely shut out of State aid for for-profit performing arts venues. When these institutions are able to reopen, we anticipate that audiences will be greatly diminished—typically 80% full is the break-even point—and we will incur significant new costs to open safely (such as rapid testing of staff and artists and protocols like CLEAR for audiences). Short term relief will help this sector through this period. Funding should be commensurate with organization size to be meaningful.

**$10M** - Fund to invest in cultural groups in neighborhoods and communities hardest hit by COVID. Relief grants available to cultural organizations of every size to help them stabilize and recover from the economic devastation of COVID. This fund will target arts and culture groups and independent artists located in and/or doing work in communities hardest hit by COVID - determined by zip codes that had the highest infection and highest death tolls. It can also mean groups and artists in the disabled community who suffered disproportionately. The goal is to save the most vulnerable organizations, most at risk of closing, whose services are the most needed in these neighborhoods which had the fewest cultural assets before COVID.




Matthew Bershadker
President & CEO

# American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

*Hearing before New York City Council's Committee on Finance on the NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL FISCAL YEAR 2022 EXECUTIVE BUDGET*

**May 25, 2021**

Good morning. My name is Matt Bershadker. I am the President and CEO of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). The ASPCA is deeply committed to providing critical services for at-risk animals, low-income families, and all New Yorkers in this time of crisis, which is why we appreciate this opportunity to express our support for restoring $3 million in funding for Animal Care Centers of NYC's (ACC) pet retention and community pets program.

The ASPCA has had a productive, forward-reaching relationship with ACC since its inception in 1994. The creation and sustainability of a comprehensive and effective animal care program in NYC requires the partnership of many groups and agencies. Since 2017, ACC has maintained a placement rate of more than 90%, making New York City one of the nation's leaders in the placement of dogs, cats, and rabbits among high-intake shelters.

We are grateful to the Council and the administration for making clear their commitment to protecting at-risk animals by passing legislation to establish full-service animal shelters in every borough, providing funding for such shelters, and selecting sites for new facilities in the Bronx and Queens. In FY'20 the New York City Council appropriated $3 million dollars to ACC, allowing them to fund an innovative approach to preventing animal surrenders. Their safety net services included admissions counseling for owners considering relinquishing their animals, providing owners with alternate solutions to enable them to keep their pets, and programs like Community Pets, which provides critical resources, pet food, veterinary care and microchips to families in underserved neighborhoods–offering a vital resource that is needed now more than ever as New York City continues to face the challenges brought on by the COVID pandemic. Unfortunately, due to the City's financial hardships, this funding was cut for FY'21, at a time when this work was in high demand as a critical element in the City's collaborative response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We believe that pets and people belong together; that financial circumstances alone are not reliable indicators of the capacity to love and care for a companion animal, and that

strong bonds between people and pets make for stronger communities. From our direct care of companion animals, our work with animal welfare agencies, veterinarians, law enforcement and policy makers and our own research, we've also learned that there are a variety of challenging circumstances that can cause pets to lose their homes. Poverty, short term emergencies, illness, lack of affordable, accessible vet care, and a shortage of pet friendly housing can conspire to force even the most devoted pet owner to relinquish a beloved pet to a local shelter or rescue group. For owners who are either unable to care for a pet or who no longer wish to do so, surrender to a shelter or rescue group may, at times, be the best outcome. But, as we continue to work closely with communities and to study the reasons why people relinquish their pets, we've learned that too often pet owners who have strong emotional bonds with their pets would choose to keep their pet, if only provided the short term help needed to make it possible. Considering the vital role pets play in our lives – especially in times of crisis and stress – it is extremely important to safeguard their health and welfare as much as we possibly can.

We thank the Council for recognizing the link between people and pets and urge your continued support for ACC so that they can keep moving forward with this important work, and connect communities to information and vital resources for keeping pets and people together. Your funding will ensure that ACC can maintain and enhance its levels of service, as their work is essential and needed now more than ever.

Thank you.

Astor Services for Children & Families
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**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL FISCAL YEAR 2022**
**EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING**
**Testimony to the NYC Council Committee on Finance**
**May 25, 2021**

Good Morning, my name is Yvette Bairan, and I am the Chief Executive Officer at Astor Services for Children & Families, serving both the Mid-Hudson Valley and the Bronx. In my role as CEO, I lead Astor in the administration and oversight of our children's mental health services, child welfare services, school-based and early childhood development programs. Astor works closely with community and civic leaders, as well as elected officials to ensure that our resources are available for New York's constituents desperately in need of our services. I would like to testify today about New York's mental health crisis service delivery system as well as the need to improve the response of mental health crises in our communities. It is an issue that deals with both investment and capacity and one that Astor takes very seriously.

Since 1953, Astor has provided critical services for over 10,000 vulnerable children and their families annually, primarily from our black and Latino communities. These children, adolescents and teens struggle daily with emotional, behavioral, mental, and psychological problems, often experiencing debilitating isolation and anxiety which has been further exacerbated because of the pandemic. Many of the children we serve are at risk of placement in foster care; while others are families that need our assistance and expertise in helping them develop the skills and support needed to raise their children to be happy, independent, functioning young adults in an environment filled with increasing challenges.

Across the country, and particularly in the Bronx, the COVID-19 crisis is exacerbating children's unmet mental health needs. Statistics show that 1 in 6 U.S. youth experience a mental health condition each year, but only half get treatment. 59.6% of youth with major depression do not receive any mental health treatment. As providers scramble to meet new behavioral health challenges resulting from isolation, economic and housing insecurity, family loss, and heightened child welfare risks, including a disturbing increase in suicide attempts, Astor has been working tirelessly ensuring that our clients and the communities we serve are receiving the support and resources needed to help our children and their families during these unchartered times. Well before the pandemic, Astor was on the forefront providing tele-mental health services, as well as in-person care management and prevention services when needed, to ensure that the families we serve get the help they need and know that they are not alone. Those practices continued throughout the last 14+ months and still are in place today. We work closely with several schools throughout the Bronx to make sure that as students return to the classroom both in-person and remotely, that they are transitioning seamlessly. At Astor we truly feel that every child deserves a childhood and do everything in our power to ensure that the children and families we serve feel that as well.

Since shifting most of our services to tele-mental health in March of last year, which included establishing a hotline number for anyone needing assistance, we have had more than 167,109 tele-

mental health sessions and have admitted more than 4,136 new clients. As the numbers increase, our ability to keep up with providing quality tele-mental health and in-person services is being jeopardized because of insufficient access to reliable technology and a staff shortage in the field. Astor is looking to invest in enabling us to provide our workforce with the necessary tools to adequately conduct tele-mental health visits and provide technical and emotional assistance when and where it is needed most. This coupled with the proposed increases in broadband services from the Federal government is a great first step in addressing the service delivery gaps that we are currently facing in our communities.

Unfortunately, access is not the only roadblock that providers like Astor are facing. Capacity and workforce retention has always been an issue in the human services field. Providers are expected to do more with less and that cannot be more evident than in the current backlogs and wait times that most families in our communities are facing when trying to schedule mental health appointments. Astor currently employs over 800 staff agencywide that range from direct care workers to clinicians and mental health counselors. All these roles are crucial in maintaining our infrastructure needed to bring our State back to normalcy and assist families in need of vital mental and behavioral supports. As administrations change and new initiatives are proposed, we need to make sure that those providers and professionals that have been doing the work in the community are not left out of the planning and execution of new initiatives. This is of upmost importance as more than 1 million young scholars are slated to return to the classrooms come the fall after being remote and isolated from peers and the school environment. We are already working with the Department of Educations and the Department of Health to establish screening and referral mechanisms to allow for a much more seamless transition, but we cannot do it alone.

Astor currently has discretionary budget asks submitted to the City that will allow us to upgrade our telehealth and telecommunications systems as well as allow us the opportunity to hire bilingual family support advocates to assist in building a bridge to care and prevention when it comes to mental health challenges. We are also working towards enhancing our DEI trainings and curriculum to ensure that our workforce is trained and equipped with the tools and knowledge to best serve our communities as we move into a new reality post-Covid.

We are all aware of the unprecedented challenges ahead but considering the exasperating mental health challenges facing children and their families during Covid, we must remain optimistic that you will partner with us on this journey by recognizing how imperative it is for us to create and enhance our capabilities to continue to provide the vital services desperately needed to help our City's vulnerable children and families.

We appreciate our partners in the City Council and look forward to working with you to give these children the opportunity to heal and become healthy functioning members of our community. I know, with your support, we can come out of this stronger and more united than ever before. Thank you.

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**Ballet Hispánico**
**City Council Testimony**
**Executive Budget Hearing**
**May 25, 2021**

On behalf of the Ballet Hispánico (BH) *familia*, I would like to thank the members of the committee for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. At this critical juncture, public funding for cultural organizations like Ballet Hispánico is needed more than ever. As the nation's renowned Latino dance organization and one of America's Cultural Treasures, Ballet Hispánico depends on the City Council's continued support to keep its doors open. **We respectfully request FY22 support of $50,000 for Coalition Theaters of Color, and continued allocated resources toward CASA programming.** We appreciate this opportunity to advocate for funding in the FY22 budget.

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. The need for place, both culturally and artistically, led families to find Ballet Hispánico. The focus on dance as a means to develop working artists, combined with the training, authenticity of voice, and power of representation, fueled the organization's roots and trajectory. Today, Ballet Hispánico brings communities together to celebrate and explore Latino cultures through innovative dance performances, transformative dance training, and enduring community engagement experiences. Its robust slate of activities across its three main programs – its Company, the School of Dance, and Community Arts Partnerships – continue to be rooted in this core mission to serve as a platform for historically omitted and overlooked artists by providing them with increased capacity, voice, and affirmation.

Like every arts organization, Ballet Hispánico suffered the crushing financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across all aspects of its operations. Without the city's steadfast commitment to funding arts education and arts organizations, lifting them up through the dark days of the pandemic, Ballet Hispánico would not have been able to continue its vital education and community programming. As an integral part of the New York City cultural ecosystem, we are grateful for the City Council's support for our longstanding CASA programming and arts education programs, which throughout the years has yielded a tremendous return on investment for all New Yorkers. During a typical year, Ballet Hispánico reaches over 20,000 New Yorkers through its three main programs, and reaches nearly 30,000 New Yorkers through its virtual programs and social media. In addition our Community Arts Partnerships and School of Dance programming engage some 12,000 of the city's youth each year.

It is thanks to the New York City Council that Ballet Hispánico can continue to be the focal point for Latinx dance in the United States, standing as a catalyst of change and possibility for communities throughout our nation. I invite you to take a few moments to continue reading below, and learn a bit more about who we are and how we serve the people of New York.

With thanks for your continued support,

Emily Mathis Corona
Assistant Director of Institutional Relations

**FY22 Support for Arts Organizations**
In recognition of the enormous financial needs of cultural institutions like Ballet Hispánico, reliable support from the city has kept the digital doors of BH open and ensured programmatic continuity. As this committee deliberates the level of continued funding for the city's cultural sector, arts organizations like Ballet Hispánico depend on city funding in order to maintain and grow public-serving programs. FY22 support for continued CASA programming and $50,000 for Coalition Theaters of Color will ensure Ballet Hispánico can continue reaching new communities, amplifying underserved voices, and welcoming marginalized artists and students to New York City's stages. Ballet Hispánico's artistic, educational, and community engagement efforts welcome BIPOC communities, including those hardest hit by the pandemic and those that are underserved and underrepresented in the field of dance. As we recover from the tragedy of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ballet Hispánico provides the critical mechanism to empower young New Yorkers to grow and thrive in a post-pandemic world. 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 education:
*"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." – School of Dance parent*

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*"I'm so proud to be Latinx. I grew up in a very divided way though. … I knew I did not want that hardship for my child and was so grateful to be able to send her to BH where she only felt pride in her heritage and that pride was nurtured."*
*– Ballet Hispánico parent*

**School of Dance**
The Ballet Hispánico 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 of Dance offers 90 classes each week, for 35 weeks during the school year. Students enroll in Adventures in Dance (Los Pasitos, ages 2-5), the General Program (Encuentros, for ages 6-18), or the Pre-Professional (Pre-Pro) Program (La Academia, ages 8-21). Throughout its 50 years, the School has provided an inclusive and liberating environment to over 1,000 students of all ages and abilities. The School is proud of its role in nurturing the next generation of strong, confident dancers.

*"All my experiences in this school have challenged me in new ways, forcing myself to dig deep into myself and make decisions. This is the case with my movement, but also with my interactions as a human being. I've accessed greater range and developed a sense of agency – but more importantly, I've matured and learned how to carry myself in a variety of situations with dignity. … The work that Ballet Hispánico does for the dance field is extremely crucial, and I'm infinitely grateful that BH has had its part in my story." – School of Dance student*

**Community Arts Partnerships**
From its inception, Ballet Hispánico has been centered in its mission to increase access to dance through community outreach, engagement, and education. The Community Arts Partnerships (CAP) programs are the heart of this endeavor, and have developed a reputation over the years for providing quality school programs, reaching underserved and underrepresented New Yorkers. 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, classroom workshops and master classes, *Diálogos*, online residency programs and after-school

activities, and Performances for Young People (PYP). PYP features a series of 50-minute narrated performances that celebrate Latinx dance, and is expected to reach some 10,000 NYC children and adults in 2021-2022. Over the last year CAP has dramatically expanded its digital footprint, and will continue to grow the virtual programs and workshops it has developed. CAP programs reach thousands of New Yorkers of every walk of life, uplifting young people of Hispanic heritage and inspiring all to learn about Latinx culture through the lens of dance.

*"Each year, I am blown away by the promise and confidence displayed by our children as a direct result of working with your dancers and instructors." – Carol Ann Gilligan, Principal PS/MS 498*

**Ballet Hispánico Company**
Performances by the 15-member Ballet Hispanico Company include an annual New York Season, as well as domestic and international touring. As New York City gradually reopens, Ballet Hispanico administration anticipates Company activities to gradually resume in full over the course of 2021-2022. The Ballet Hispánico Company returned to the rehearsal studio in April for the first time in over a year. The Company performed during our virtual 50th Anniversary Celebration on May 27, which was also hosted by and featured performances from School of Dance students. In summer 2021 the Company will make special appearances at outdoor events such as Jacob's Pillow, Lincoln Center, the new Little Island @Pier55, and at our annual *A Calle* Block Party on West 89th Street in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month. *Instituto Coreográfico*, a BH choreographic institute for Latinx artists, annually welcomes two emerging choreographers-in-residence and dance filmmaker partners for professional development and support. Through its community performances and professional development activities, the BH Company seeks to cultivate Latinx artists who understood the needs of local communities, and have the tools to work both on stage and off authentically.

*"Dance changes lives, and Ballet Hispánico is at the forefront of that." – Lin Manuel Miranda (Composer, Lyricist, & Actor, In the Heights and Hamilton)*

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**COVID-19: Impact & Recovery**
The current crisis has had a negative impact on all creative and educational initiatives and the full impact of the pandemic on Ballet Hispánico continues to develop. The full financial ramifications continue to threaten the survival of all arts institutions, particularly BIPOC-led organizations like Ballet Hispánico. Yet throughout the pandemic, the digital doors of Ballet Hispánico remained open to the public, and welcomed new audiences to the BH familia through our virtual educational and community programming. Thanks to the resolute support of the City Council, along with the rollout of vaccines and increasingly lower infection rates across the country in spring 2021, Ballet Hispánico is moving in a positive direction and anticipates slowly welcoming students and dancers back to in-person activities, pending CDC guidelines, over the summer and fall:

> *Education:*
> The School is providing a full schedule of online classes during the current 2020-21 academic year, and resumed a very limited number of in-person dance classes for selected pre-professional students in March 2021. For summer 2021 the BH School of Dance will offer its summer courses using a hybrid model with both in-person and virtual classes with the ambition of fully reopening in fall 2021. Operating once again at full capacity, the School will offer over 900 students classes for every age and ability level. As in-person operations resume, BH looks forward to strengthening its commitment to nurture emerging student artists by providing enrichment activities including master classes, mentoring opportunities with the professional BH Company and artistic leadership, field trips to world-class performances, and professional development workshops. In addition, students perform in annual showcase recitals and have the

opportunity to participate in community Performances for Young People (one-hour narrated performances of excerpts from BH repertory) alongside the professional BH Company.

*Community Engagement:*
In March 2020 BH launched B*Unidos*, a comprehensive social media program that showcasing content created by the artistic and administrative staff in all of our program areas, including: streamed 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. Thanks to this rapid growth in digital initiatives, Ballet Hispánico was able to continue supporting and engaging its community. In 2020-21, Ballet Hispánico also continued its CASA programming through virtual activities. BH after-school CASA efforts currently reach students in 12 public schools in New York City. Teaching artists conduct live, multi-week online dance classes where students learn Latino folk dances and participate in complementary activities (reading, writing) to learn more about Latino music and culture. A pre-recorded, interactive PYP includes excerpts from the repertory performed by the Ballet Hispánico Company and student dancers 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 Hispánico and parents, guardians, students, and Council Members are invited to attend.

**Looking Forward**
Our virtual programs provide continuity for our students and community, making 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. And the exciting first steps toward reopening and resuming in-person programs are underway. **More than ever, organizations like Ballet Hispánico will need robust public support in order to continue championing and amplifying underrepresented voices in the field.** Each year, Ballet Hispánico provides approximately $300,000 in scholarship support to about 20% its students including both needs- and merit-based awards. In addition to this consistent support stream, leadership envisions launching a full-scale Scholars Program within the year. This comprehensive dance scholarship program would transform the lives of young Latino/a children from low-income families in New York City, by providing students with incomparable dance training and holistic support that will insure academic and personal success. Scholarships will include full dance training awards covering tuition and all related expenses including shoes, dance specific clothing, and supplies, as well as 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. The cost of planning and implementation for the three-year pilot for ten students annually is $885,000. 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.

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Over the next year, our broader strategic goal as an organization focuses on programmatic and fiscal recovery and growth. As a community of dancers, artists, and human beings, we have adapted to incredible challenges and look forward to coming together as a *familia* once again. Ballet Hispánico was founded upon and has always believed in the importance of reaching and servicing our community through dance and culture. Our 50th Anniversary provides us with an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come, continue to raise our voice, get back to our roots by reaching out to community near and far, and look forward to what is ahead. We thank the New York City Council for making that possible.

**TESTIMONY OF:**

**Anya Mukarji-Connolly**

**BROOKLYN DEFENDER SERVICES**

**Presented before**

**The New York City Council**

**Committee on Finance**

**Executive Budget Hearing**

**May 25, 2021**

## I. Introduction

My name is Anya Mukarji-Connolly. I am the Associate Director of Policy at Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS). I thank the City Council Committee on Finance, and in particular Chair Dromm, for this opportunity to testify about our work and the importance of funding for indigent defense providers in New York City.

BDS provides multi-disciplinary and people-centered criminal, family, and immigration defense, as well as civil legal services, social work support and advocacy to nearly 30,000 people and their families in Brooklyn every year. Through specialized units of the office, we provide extensive wrap-around services that meet the needs of traditionally under-served clients in a comprehensive way. In addition to zealous legal defense, we provide a wide range of additional services to meet our clients' unique needs, including help with housing, benefits, education, and employment. In many cases these services are of a preventive nature, helping people avoid loss of housing or immigration status, assuring benefits are available when needed to avoid hunger, or addressing education issues before a student leaves school.

This Council has been responsible for legislating and funding groundbreaking programs to meet the needs of communities that are highly surveilled but unreached by other service providers—including the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project, which is ensuring universal representation to immigrant New Yorkers facing deportation and the Family Advocacy and Guardianship Support initiative, which provides advocacy to families being investigated by the Administration for Children's Services.

This is a unique moment in our City's history as a world-wide public health pandemic has laid bare the profound inequities nationwide and further deepened the disparities in healthcare, employment, and housing, making marginalized communities more vulnerable to legal systems involvement. As a nation we are also experiencing a long overdue public reckoning of systemic racism and police violence. How a society allocates its budget is a statement of its values.

While the City begins to reopen and rebuild, there is an opportunity for the Council to invest in communities and ensure that New Yorkers receive the support and resources, not surveillance, that help our City thrive.

## II. Our Work

BDS is proud to say as we move into Fiscal Year 2022, we will be celebrating 25 years since we opened our doors and began representing clients in Brooklyn. We have worked to protect the rights of the people in our communities every day since, but the need for our services is more acute than ever.

BDS' diverse staff of approximately 450 is comprised of over 280 attorneys, 50 social workers, and 120 support staff including investigators, paralegals, re-entry specialists, jail services advocates, community liaisons, policy specialists and administrative professionals. Our specialized approach allows us to provide targeted services for clients in each of our practices who have unique needs, such as veterans, people with mental illness or developmental disabilities, young people and victims of trafficking. We thank the City Council for your consistent support of indigent legal service providers.

BDS is one of the largest intuitional providers of indigent defense in the State. Our criminal defense and family defense practices are funded by the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) contracts for mandated legal defense. We are grateful to receive this funding from the City, but regrettably those contracts do not fully fund the entirety of our programs or costs. While we rely on this funding, the Mayor's Office has created extraordinary and unnecessary challenges that have resulted in the City owing BDS in excess of $12 million -- mostly because of delays in contracts that go back years at this point.

In order to fill the gaps in funding for our social work practice, wrap-around services, community engagement and education programming, we turn to the City Council to provide additional support through initiatives such as NYIFUP, Alternatives to Incarceration, Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI), Domestic Violence and Empowerment Initiative (DOVE), and the

Family Advocacy and Guardianship Support. We are extremely grateful for that support and leadership from the Council and the Speaker.

- **Criminal Defense Practice**

**BDS provides criminal defense representation to nearly 30,000 people arrested each year in Brooklyn.** BDS has over 140 criminal defense attorneys, each extremely dedicated and skilled in all aspects of criminal law. Our attorneys are availed of extensive training and supervision throughout the stages of their legal practice. They provide wrap-around services in collaboration with interdisciplinary teams of *Padilla* immigration attorney specialists, social workers, client advocates, paralegals, investigators and administrative staff. In order to address the unique needs of our clients, BDS' criminal defense practice has a number of dedicated and specialized units which provide targeted services to adolescents, clients with mental illness, victims of trafficking, veterans and clients with overlapping criminal, family court, and immigration issues.

Although most courts remain closed, the criminal courts are hearing essential applications and are conducting arraignments day and night by video. BDS staff has adapted to handle these arraignments throughout this challenging and constantly evolving process. In many instances there is no way to resolve cases, so most of the pending cases and new cases are currently ongoing. Despite the changes and uncertainty, our staff has stepped up and remains flexible and ready to see our clients through this pandemic. While still representing thousands of existing clients, BDS is also getting new clients daily. We have made sure everyone knows they are not alone during this extremely difficult time and we will do anything we can to keep the people we represent safe and healthy during the pandemic as we fight for a good outcome on their case.

**We respectfully request that the City Council continue to insist that the City fully fund indigent criminal defense, and that the Council holds the Mayor's office accountable to moving our contracts through the process in an expeditious manner.**

- **Family Defense Practice**

**BDS is the primary provider of representation to parents and caretakers in Brooklyn who are facing ACS investigations or child neglect and abuse cases in Family Court.** Our Family Defense Practice represents about 4,000 parents each year. We have represented over 13,000 parents and caretakers in Brooklyn Family Court and have helped more than 20,000 children remain safely at home or leave foster care and reunite with their families.

The family defense practice includes over 50 attorneys, 10 social workers, plus paralegals, parent advocates, and administrative staff. Most of the people we represent are people of color living in poverty, raising their children in homeless shelters or public housing, and in highly policed neighborhoods, making them vulnerable to government surveillance, including ACS. While our clients usually have many needs that impact their ability to keep their families together, in our experience many of these families are traumatized by separation and receive little government

support to stay together with services in place. Our family defense clients live primarily in the low-income neighborhoods of East New York, Brownsville, and Bedford Stuyvesant.

In addition to representing parents who have cases filed against them, crucial funding from the New York City Council allows BDS to advocate for parents facing child welfare investigations by ACS before a case is filed in court. BDS' Right to Family Advocacy project—part of the City Council Family Advocacy and Guardianship Support Initiative—provides parents and caretakers information and legal advice to navigate the child welfare system, advocacy at Child Safety Conferences, referrals for services to help address any underlying issues, and support in developing safety plans to prevent cases from being filed in court or having children removed.

In addition to zealous legal advocacy that often results in keeping families together, BDS is able to provide social work support to parents and caretakers. Combined, these services dramatically increase the likelihood that families will be able to stay together or eventually reunify.[1] The time frame that our clients' children stay in foster care is shorter when these additional resources are available, resulting in monetary savings and very tangible benefits to children and families in New York City.[2]

**It is important to note that the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice has cut funding for Family Defense every year even as the pending caseload has continued to grow.** As a result, at our current level of funding, BDS is unable to represent all eligible clients in Family Court, thus denying Brooklyn residents the array of services that BDS has available and better outcomes on their cases. Furthermore, the current level of funding is insufficient to sustain our representation model at current intake targets, and further cuts would be extremely harmful as we work to keep families together. **BDS requests that the City Council insist that the Mayor restore our FY22 funding to match our FY21 allocation.**

- **Immigration Practice**

**BDS' multi-unit immigration practice works to minimize the negative immigration consequences of criminal charges for noncitizens, represent our clients in applications for immigration benefits and defend our clients against ICE detention and deportation.** Since 2009, we have counseled, advised, or represented more than 15,000 clients in immigration matters including deportation defense, affirmative applications, advisals, and immigration consequence consultations in Brooklyn's criminal court system.

BDS is one of three New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) providers and has represented more than 1,500 people in detained deportation proceedings since the inception of the program in 2013. Our NYIFUP team represents people in detained and non-detained removal

[1] Preliminary results from the Action Research Study (2019) that have been shared with MOCJ found that institutional providers save each child an average of 118 days in foster care as compared to families that were represented by lawyers from the 18-b panel.

[2] Commission on Parental Legal Representation. Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore, February 2019. pp34.

proceedings in bond, merits hearings, release advocacy with ICE, administrative and federal court appeals, and federal district court challenges to unlawful detention.

Our Immigration Community Action Project (ICAP), which receives Immigrant Opportunity Initiative (IOI) funding, represents people in non-detained removal proceedings as well as applications for immigration benefits, including family-based applications for lawful permanent status, fear-based applications, U & T visas, Special Juvenile Immigrant Status (SIJS), DACA renewal and related applications. BDS' ICAP team specializes in providing affirmative immigration legal services in complicated cases and prioritizes people that are current or former clients of BDS and their families, formerly justice-system involved non-citizens, community residents referred from partner organizations, and individuals referred by constituent affairs offices.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, BDS' immigration team sprang into action to fight for the release and safety of our detained clients and the due process rights of our non-detained clients. While some deportation cases have been postponed, filing deadlines are still in effect in some immigration court cases in New York. Meanwhile, hearings for detained individuals are still taking place at Varick Street Immigration Court.

None of the work that the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project providers—Brooklyn Defender Services, the Legal Aid Society and The Bronx Defenders—do would be possible without the support and funding of the New York City Council.

As we move into a new era where we hope the cruel immigration policies of the prior presidential administration are put to an end, the need is actually greater for this important program. While it seems that deportations will be less common, there are still hundreds of people whose cases have already been filed and whom we currently represent. In addition, there is the hope that many people previously unable to obtain status will have a new opportunity to stay with their families in the United States. One example is DACA, which has already been reinstated. Many of these programs require complicated documents and a thorough risk analysis before filing, particularly if someone has been arrested in the past. In order to meet that need, and possibly stave off deportation and allow Brooklynites to achieve status, we need the continued support of the City Council for the NYIFUP program. **BDS requests that the City Council continue to fund the NYIFUP providers at their current level to fully fund the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project in FY2022.**

- **Civil Justice Practice**

**BDS' Civil Justice Practice assists clients on essential civil matters that affect them, including housing, education, employment and access to benefits. In the past year the Civil Justice team represented or connected BDS clients with services in approximately 1,000 cases.** The Civil Justice Practice seeks to reduce the civil collateral consequences for low-income clients who have had interaction with the criminal, family or immigration justice systems. Through legal advocacy in court and at various agencies, we assist people in remaining in their homes, maintaining their public benefits, staying in school, keeping their jobs, and protecting

their consumer rights. In order to achieve these ends, we practice in almost all of New York City's courts at every level from trial to appeals.

BDS' Civil Justice Practice is working with clients across all practice areas to help them access benefits, remain in housing, and assure their children obtain the education they deserve and to which they are entitled. Our attorneys and social workers are working with most of our clients in very direct ways to assure they have access to food and healthcare, are aware of and have assistance applying for benefits, are aware of their children's educational rights, and are getting the paid sick or family leave they require.

## III. FY22 Priority City Council Budget Requests

We are extremely grateful for the financial support the Council has provided BDs over recent years. Though the City provides contracted funds for our core indigent defense representation in Criminal, Immigration and Family Court, the wrap-around services that make our model unique and transformative are only possible because of your support. Every program you help fund—NYIFUP, our pre-entry/re-entry program through Alternatives to Incarceration, our Immigrant Communities Advocacy Program through Immigrant Opportunities Initiative, family defense through Family Advocacy and Guardianship Support—plays an essential role in providing critically needed services to New Yorkers, which would otherwise go unfunded by the City.

We would like to highlight our priority Council funded asks for FY22:

### 1. NYIFUP Funding: BDS' New York Immigrant Family Unity Project

The New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFIUP) is the national's first-ever universal representation program for detained immigrants facing deportation. The partnership of Brooklyn Defender Services along with The Bronx Defenders and The Legal Aid Society is requesting $16.6 million ($5,533,333 per organization) to continue serving as NYIFUP's three legal service providers. This request will allow the program to maintain capacity to handle the large volume of direct representation to low-income detained New Yorkers facing deportation and challenge unlawful or unconstitutional government action in federal court. With increases in immigration enforcement and detention, this project is more important than ever to prevent New York families from the devastating consequences of detention and deportation. With the potential of meaningful legal remedies for the clients we already represent under the Biden administration, NYIFUP stands ready to help each of our clients apply for status, as well as fight the pending deportations that are left over from the prior administrations harsh and unfair policies. To preserve this Council's commitment to the groundbreaking NYIFUP initiative, we ask that the initiative be baselined in the City budget.

**The NYIFUP Coalition submitted a joint request for $16,600,000, split evenly among the three providers, to fully fund the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project in FY21. BDS is requesting $5,533,333 as our proportionate share.**

### 2. Family Advocacy and Guardian Support: Right to Family Advocacy Initiative

The Right to Family Advocacy Initiative is a two- year-old initiative that provides desperately needed due process, representation and advocacy services to individuals and families involved in the child welfare system. Brooklyn Defender Services, with the Bronx Defenders, Center for Family Representation and Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, is requesting funding of $3,000,000 ($750,000 for BDS) from the City Council. With this funding, the four offices that represent parents involved in the child welfare system will continue to advocate for parents during ACS investigations *before a case is filed* and represent parents with the State Central Register to clear their child abuse and neglect records for employment purposes.

**BDS submitted a joint request for $3,000,000, divided equally among the four providers, to fully fund the Right to Family Advocacy Initiative. BDS is requesting $750,000 as our share.**

### 3. Immigrant Opportunities Initiative: BDS' Immigration Community Action Project

BDS' Immigration Community Action Project (ICAP) team serves a large number of individuals in naturalization, adjustment of status, DACA, SIJS, and other affirmative asylum applications with USCIS. Working in collaboration with our NYIFUP team, once a person is released from detention through BDS's NYIFUP representation, if there is a benefit that requires an affirmative application, our ICAP team assumes their immigration case through a seamless internal referral process (e.g., if they can apply to USCIS for a benefit that the judge does not have jurisdiction over, such as a U visa, SIJS, or a spouse's visa petition on their behalf). ICAP also assists people after a removal case is complete such as when relief is granted and there are next steps like green card renewals, citizenship, petitions for other family members, citizenship, orders of supervision, applications for employment authorization, etc. These critical immigration services comprise BDS' non-detained immigration legal and social services and are a necessary component of supportive immigration assistance for people in New York.

Increased funding is needed for BDS to more comprehensively serve New York City's immigrant youth, families, and communities with desperately needed high-quality immigration legal services. This funding would help BDS continue serving New York City's immigrant families by providing legal screening, advice, and direct representation to low-income immigrants in their pursuit of affirmative immigration benefits such as citizenship, lawful permanent residence, asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, special trafficking and victims' visas, VAWA relief, TPS and DACA, and in their defense against deportation in non-detained deportation proceedings and orders of supervision.

**We ask that the Council support our IOI ask of $200,000 to expand our ability to provide direct immigration legal services and Know Your Rights trainings to Brooklyn residents.**

## IV. Conclusion

BDS is fortunate to have the support of the City Council to supplement the services we provide as a public defender office in Brooklyn. BDS' requested funding will ensure we can continue to provide quality legal services to indigent New Yorkers. We thank the City Council for the

opportunity to testify today and for your continued support of the people, families and communities we represent in Brooklyn.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at amukarjiconnolly@bds.org or Kristine Herman, Managing Director of Policy and Advocacy at kherman@bds.org.

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**Broadway Housing Communities**
**FY22 City Council Testimony**

On behalf of Broadway Housing Communities, Inc. (BHC), we want to thank you for your continued, generous support. I am asking today that the Council prioritize and expand funding for cultural groups, educational youth services, and supportive housing programs. In FY22, Broadway Housing Communities is requesting support totaling **$275,000 for BHC and $115,000 for the Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling**.

COVID-19 has had a deep impact on BHC's community, with the effects of this crisis expected to continue for months and even years to come. Despite this crisis, BHC has worked to continue to support the needs of its community, including assisting residents with securing medical and mental health services, unemployment issues, and helping the home-bound obtain groceries and medication. BHC has also continued to provide permanent affordable housing and high-impact supports; early childhood education programs; and arts and cultural access through the Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling (SHCMAS).

We would appreciate the Council's support in these efforts, including:

- **Speakers' Initiative: BHC's Early Childhood Programs**, which serve some of NYC's most vulnerable children from birth to age five and their families, and **SHCMAS's Family Programs and School Partnerships**, which provide arts and cultural programming and partnerships with Title I schools.
- **Discretionary Child Care: BHC's Early Childhood Programs**
- **Manhattan Delegation: BHC's Youth Leadership Institute**, which will support youth living in BHC residences and the larger community as they transition into adulthood, creating opportunities for youth to grow and thrive, and **SHCMAS's Family Programs and School Partnerships.**
- **Community Housing Preservation Strategies: BHC's Tenant Services Program,** which provides BHC tenants and community members with information and support services to secure and maintain permanent affordable housing.
- **Cultural Immigrant Initiative: SHCMAS's Storytelling Programs**, which provide free weekly storytelling programs to the community.
- **CASA Initiative:** an after school partnership between **SHCMAS and P.S. 28 Wright Brothers**.

**Broadway Housing Communities**

The Delta
Benziger-Abraham House
The Rio
Dorothy Day Apartments
Sugar Hill Apartments

Dorothy Day Early Childhood Center
Sugar Hill Museum Preschool

Rio Penthouse Gallery
Rio Gallery II
Rio Gallery III

Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling

Additionally, Rio Housing Development Fund Company* (Broadway Rio HDFC*, which is managed by BHC), is requesting **$1,915,762 in Capital Support** from the New York City Council for **renovations at the Rio**, an affordable housing property located at 10 Ft. Washington Avenue. Acquired in 1991, under Mayor Dinkins, The Rio was initially renovated using an innovative combination of Low-Income Supportive Housing Tax Credits (the first LIHTC investment in the nation) and an HPD SRO Loan. Consisting of 82 rent-stabilized units (seventy-five studios and seven 2-bedroom units), as well as a community gallery, the property is a fixture of housing stability in Washington Heights, and provides additional community support through the Front Desk program, which provides steady employment for BHC's tenants and residents of Community Board 9.

In order to maintain the Rio as a resource for Washington Heights, it is our intent to undertake moderate renovations. The proposed scope of work will upgrade each apartment to have modern energy efficient appliances and lighting and new kitchen cabinets, ensuring that our elderly tenants have appropriate safety fixtures as they age in place.

Renovations will also expand the Rio's value to the community by adding a greenhouse to the Rio Penthouse Gallery and the installation of a green roof with an event space. Capital funding is made more necessary as urgent repairs to the building's elevators are expected to be costly, and occur prior to the award of any City discretionary funding.

We appreciate the City Council's commitment and dedication to the community, and for your consideration of these requests, which are vital to ensure BHC's ability to serve its tenants, families, and community members both during and after this crisis.

# Testimony to the Finance Committee of the New York City Council on the FY22 Budget - 5/25/2021

Good morning members of the Finance Committee of the NYC City Council:

I am Matt Sturiale, President and CEO of Birch Family Services, Inc. Birch has been providing educational, residential, community and employment services to people with autism and other developmental disabilities for over 45 years. Each year we impact the lives of more than 2000 individuals and their families. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the Committee on the proposed budget – specifically as it pertains to Preschool Special Education.

Birch is a leading provider of special education preschool services in NYC, operating 8 NYS approved 4410 preschool programs in the boroughs of Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. We provide education and related services to more than 1,000 students ages 3-5 each year throughout NYC. The students that we provide services to are NYC public school students who are referred to us by the NYC Dept. of Education because they are unable to meet the students' needs. Birch works in partnership with the NYC DOE in providing UPK, early childhood, and special classes in our preschool programs so children may thrive in the least restrictive environment. My testimony will focus on issues pertaining to equity, access, and quality that currently exists in 4410 programs and recommendations to address these matters.

Preschool special education programs offer small class sizes and provide students with targeted, individualized academic and social-emotional interventions. The majority of special education preschool students in NYC (86%) receive their services through community based non-public programs operating 4410 special classes ranging from 6 to 18 students. Children with disabilities who have the opportunity for this specialized intervention during the preschool years are more likely to succeed in elementary school and beyond.

We applaud the Mayor for recognizing the value of 4410 programs through expansion of Universal Pre-K to include 3-K and increase special education integrated classes. However, the proposed Executive Budget only includes a new investment of $22M in FY 22 to the NYC DOE, and an increase to $88M in FY 23, for preschool special education without an immediate or clear plan to support non-public 4410 education providers who serve an overwhelming majority of this population.

Will a Free and Appropriate Public Education be afforded to special education students? This must be called to question. Prior to the pandemic, there was a shortage of more than 1,000 preschool special class seats. While referrals have declined during the pandemic, there continues to be a shortage of class seats particularly those in need of 6 and 8 student classes in the current school year. This lack of access to the right kind of educational opportunity cannot continue in the upcoming school year. While current referrals to early intervention services is approaching pre-pandemic levels, the lack of evaluations, reduced services, challenges for children birth to 3 and their families to benefit from remote therapies, and lack of referrals to preschool special education over the past year leads us to anticipate that the needs of the children may be more intensive during the next 12-24 months. The expansion of 3-K for all of NY City's children is

laudable but to be accessible and equitable for all, we must ensure there is an adequate capacity of special classes for those mandated for such placement. The city budget does not allow for that.

We commend the City Council's response to the budget and support their proposal of $85M to address the shortage of special education classes. The Council's budget goes one step further – it reflects the Council's commitment to ensure salary parity for those certified special education teachers working with our most complex and vulnerable students in community based 4410 non-public schools like Birch Family Services.

Our 4410 programs have had significant problems recruiting and retaining certified special educators as a result of inequities in funding. For example, over the past 10 years, there has been only a 10% increase in tuition in 4410s, while public schools have received a 40% tuition increase. This lack of funding, along with the expansion of UPK, has created challenges in our ability to retain qualified teachers. In 2019, the Mayor and City Council saw this inequity and reached a salary parity agreement for every certified teacher in early childhood education programs except for 4410 programs.

As a result, these teachers have received increases over the past 2 years and are expected to receive an additional increase in October 2021. At that time, early childhood teachers with a Master's Degree will have an annual salary of $68,652. This is significantly higher than the average salary of special education teachers working in organizations like Birch Family Services. This means that the teachers who are serving preschoolers with the most significant disabilities will be the lowest paid preschool teachers in the City. We are concerned that this will result in special education teachers leaving our programs to work in early childhood education programs in other CBOs or the DOE. This will ultimately lead to our students being left without experienced, certified teachers and this will inevitably impact quality. Finally, our inability to recruit qualified teachers may result in closed classrooms in our schools leaving those with the most needs at home without a teacher to support them. Over the last 5 years, 34 CBOs have closed their doors in NYC due to staff recruitment issues and lack of tuition increases. This trend needs to stop now.

Preschoolers with significant disabilities cannot wait another year for the City to make needed investments to meet their needs. To do so would result in a lack of equity, access, and quality of program for preschoolers with disabilities. This would be a travesty for NYC public school children.

We urge the Council to do the right thing and include their proposed $85 million in the final budget for FY 22 to address the issues of equity, access, and quality presented, ensure that every preschool child who requires a special education seat has one and that preschool special education teachers are treated the same as all NYC early childhood education teachers.

Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,



Matt Sturiale
President/CEO

# Testimony of the
# Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board

## Regarding the FY22 Executive Budget

May 25, 2021

This comment is presented on behalf of the Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board (BkSWAB). BkSWAB is a volunteer citizens' organization with a mission of helping New York City achieve its zero waste goals. Our members are appointed by the Brooklyn Borough President and tasked with advising the Borough President, City Council Members, City Administration, NY State Legislators, and others on matters related to materials management, and specifically waste prevention, recycling and other beneficial reuse.

We welcome the financial commitment to improving the environmental quality and waste management processes of the City, and support the intent behind many of the initiatives outlined in the recent Budget, such as diversion of organic waste, tackling street cleanliness, and implementation of the Commercial Waste Zones. However, as presented, this Budget does little to establish these initiatives in a manner that is equitable and financially sustainable, and does not seek to promote the reduction of waste as the primary means of bringing cost and environmental benefits to the City.

The proposed reintroduction of curbside organic waste collections underlines this. When the brown bin program was cancelled for FY2021 following the outbreak of Covid-19, this was reflective of a broader failure to establish sufficient participation in the scheme. Curbside organics as it stood cost more than trash collections per ton, making it a cost burden to the City; while its deployment only in selected neighborhoods led to issues of equity and access. The proposed $30m for its reintroduction does nothing to address these issues: as it stands it will see the brown bins return in the same neighborhoods on an opt-in basis, leaving the program vulnerable to failure on exactly the same terms.

The additional $33m for waste export is a reflection of the increase in quantities of domestic waste as a result of Covid-19. While this is understandable, there is an opportunity to offset this increased export cost by reduction at source and increased diversion for recycling. There should be a budget for a concerted effort to make progress on both these fronts, through a variety of data-led interventions such as outreach & education and infrastructure projects such as local processing. These interventions would help to build the business case for ongoing investment in waste reduction and recycling, in lieu of sending valuable resources through Environmental Justice corridors to landfill or incineration.

We applaud the decision to restore staff resources dedicated to syringe collections: this is an important step in addressing local inequities in environmental quality. Likewise, the commitment to employ 10,000 staff who will be engaged in street cleaning offers a clear opportunity to build on this: by working with redemption centers, who already employ a network of street teams throughout the city, the work of the informal economy can be recognized and remunerated, creating a more sustainable long-term system than would be achieved by simply recruiting 10,000 temporary jobs.

Finally, the $4m provision to employ an initial 28 staff to undertake the implementation of Commercial Waste Zones also offers the potential to embed equity within this important piece of legislation. Allocating resources to ensure the inclusion and engagement of local family-run haulers and micro-haulers will ensure the revenues from this program are not funnelled exclusively to a few large companies, thereby retaining money and jobs within the city, and bolstering the resilience of the program.

In summary, we believe the initiatives outlined in this Budget should be supported by appropriate resourcing of planning, to ensure equity and financial sustainability in their implementation. Any resultant delays in the delivery of programs, such as the organic curbside collections, would be more than offset by the benefits of getting them right. The BkSWAB looks forward to continuing to work with the City to support the sustainable and equitable management of waste.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
The Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board

Chair: Oliver Wright; Vice Chair: Shari Rueckl; Secretary: Elissa Iberti; Sergeant at Arms: Elizabeth Royzman;
Members: Akhmose Ari-Hotep, Anne Bassen, Sarah Bloomquist,
Kendall Christiansen, Betty Feibusch, Suzan Frazier, Louisa Freeman, Pablo Garcia, Kevin Jaksik, Rhonda Keyser, Rose Lenoff, Celeste McMickle, Dylan Oakley, Vandra Thorburn, Greg Todd, Phil Vos

BROOKLYN PARKS AND OPEN SPACES COALITION

May 27, 2021

Honorable Daniel Dromm, Chair
NYC Council Committee on Finance

**Re: Testimony for the NYC Council Executive FY22 Budget Hearing**

Dear Council Member Dromm,

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony on behalf of the Brooklyn Parks and Open Space Coalition (BPOC).

We strongly believe that NYC parks are underfunded. They have been for decades. We proudly join New Yorker for Parks' Play Fair Now Coalition to urge Mayor de Blasio to increase funding for NYC parks. We wish to call your attention to the following key points:

- The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) suffered a 14% cut in FY21, leaving NYC parks dramatically under-resourced.
- The loss of seasonal staff, PEP officers and gardeners has been devastating for parks workers trying to cover the 14% of NYC land that is under its jurisdiction.
- 2020 parks conditions were the worst on record. The biggest issues were accessibility (parks and comfort station closures), safety, and park conditions (trash, etc.).
- NYC cannot maintain parks with volunteers. It needs a fully funded, fully staffed DPR.
- **Restoring the DPR budget to the FY20 level is a bare minimum. The majority of these positions are not baselined. We need to move beyond a cycle-to-cycle funding model. 1% or more of the city budget must be for NYC Parks.**

To address these issues, we would like the NYC City Council to work with the Mayor to increase the DPR expense budget by $78.9 million. BPOC fully supports DPR and its efforts to maintain and improve all parks in NYC. It is important to the future of our borough that we fully fund our parks.

Kind regards,



Joe Mayock
Steering Committee Member
Brooklyn Parks and Open Space Coalition (BPOC)

cc: Adam Ganser, Executive Director, New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P)

BRONX OPERA
EST. 1967

**BENJAMIN SPIERMAN, general director** **MICHAEL SPIERMAN, artistic director**

**5 minerva place, #2-j** **(718) 365-4209**
**bronx, new york 10468** **www.bronxopera.org** **BronxOpera@gmail.com**

Good morning. I'm Benjamin Spierman, General Director of the Bronx Opera Company. I'm here today to discuss the way in which Arts Funding in general, and City Council initiatives and CDF funding in particular, allow arts organizations to contribute to the education, mental health, and well-being of the people of our city. I'll talk about this in the context of Bronx Opera, but it becomes clearer and clearer every day that this is not just about our particular organization.

Over the years, Bronx Opera has participated in three City Council initiatives: CASA, SUCASA, and the Cultural Immigrant Initiative. We have also received Cultural Development Funds for our performances and for our arts education work. These funds have allowed us to create live and virtual performances and to partner with schools, parent groups, community centers, houses of worship and senior centers to work to enhance the lives of people in our community by connecting people as only the arts can. Even during COVID, we've been able to continue enriching the lives of people in our community through our (now distance-learning-based) choral programs for seniors, acting classes, music classes, and dance classes for special needs children. This work has allowed people to remain connected to each other, through shared learning and artistic work.

Like each organization you'll hear from, we feel that our work is important and deserves support. We've been privileged to count several current councilmembers as our supporters, and we thank Councilmembers Cohen, Gjonaj, Cabrera and Cumbo for what you have been able to do, as well as continuing to marvel at the dedication of Councilmember Jimmy Van Bramer. The support you all give to us as arts organizations is critical to our work, and to our ability to be part of the city's recovery from the pandemic. Our most recent example is our newest program, BxO Breathes, which has Bronx Opera singers using their breathing techniques to help recovering COVID patients regain their breath. This is just an example of what the arts community can do.

The thought that I have today is that the arts are both an end and a means. We create performances, others create exhibitions, still others create works of literature. Those are ends, and they matter. But it's the ability of the arts to educate that I'm emphasizing today, as well as in art's ability to enrich the lives of those who create it, those who witness it, and those who do both at the same time. We know that everyone is experiencing fiscal pain. We know that money will not be plentiful. We, as an organization and as a sector, ask for our fair share. We know that the people of the city will get back more than they give.



City Council Finance Committee,
Testimony before the Council of the City of New York

Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearing
May 25, 2021
Good morning.
Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today about New York City's failure to properly serve its citizens with mental disabilities.
The City must ensure that individuals who experience a mental health crisis receive appropriate services which will de-escalate the crisis and ensure their wellbeing and the wellbeing of all other New Yorkers. Only those who are trained in de-escalation practices should respond to a mental health crisis, and the most appropriate individuals to respond are peers (those with lived mental health experience) and health care providers. Police are trained to uphold law and order and are not suited to deal with individuals experiencing mental health crises. In the last five years, the NYPD has killed 18 individuals who were experiencing mental health crises, 15 of whom were people of color.
The City Council must stop the killings and authorize the Mayor's allocation of $112 million for a non-police response to mental health crises. Lives are literally at stake.
I support the proposal of Correct Crisis Intervention Today – NYC (CCIT-NYC), which will make non-police responses available to those experiencing mental health crises. The proposal calls for:
• teams of trained peers and emergency medical technicians;
• teams run by culturally competent community organizations;
• response times comparable to those of other emergencies;
• 24/7 operating hours;
• calls routed to a number other than 911; and
• oversight by an advisory board of 51% or more peers.
Please approve the Mayor's request for $112 million and please make sure the $112 million funds a non-police crisis response system of the sort proposed by CCIT-NYC.
Thank you for your consideration.

Tangier Harper
tharper@mfjlegal.org
100 William Street, 6th Floor
New York, New York 10038

Testimony - DCLA Committee Hearing - May 25, 2021

Greetings Deputy Leader Van Bramer and all members of the NYC Council.

First a huge thank you to Council Members, Alan Maisel, Steve Levin, Matthieu Eugene, Robert Cornegy and Majority Leader Laurie Cumbo for supporting Brooklyn Ballet's *Elevate* public school dance residencies and *The Brooklyn Nutcracker.* And thank you to those Members who came before you, the late Lew Fidler, David Yassky and Attorney General Letitia James for supporting Brooklyn Ballet.

Culture impacts communities. *Elevate*, Brooklyn Ballet's public school dance residency has reached more than 14,300 Brooklyn children since 2005. We serve Canarsie, Flatlands, Weeksville, Vinegar Hill, Downtown Brooklyn, Carroll Gardens and East New York. Brooklyn Ballet offers talented *Elevate* students scholarships to attend Brooklyn Ballet School in Downtown Brooklyn. Indeed, *Elevate* has brought us some of our most talented students – one of our first *Elevate* graduates now has a professional contract with Sofia National Opera Ballet - Bulgaria, another dances professionally with Norwegian National Ballet, and a third has joined Houston Ballet. Countless others have gone on to arts focused high schools and college dance programs. Without CASA and discretionary funds none of this happens.

Radical inclusivity is one of the hallmarks of Brooklyn Ballet. *The Brooklyn Nutcracker*'s cast of 35 ethnically diverse dancers include immigrant dancers from Cuba, Trinidad, China, and Japan, as well as over 30 young dancers from Brooklyn Ballet School. In 2019 *The Brooklyn Nutcracker* at the Kings Theatre reached a total of over 4,000 audience members including over 1,000 public school children, seniors, foster kids, and adults with disabilities, who attended at low or no cost. Cultural Immigrant Initiative grants makes *The Brooklyn Nutcracker* possible.

There is no recovery without the Arts. Brooklyn Ballet is in full support of the Cultural Recovery Program attached to this testimony.

Culture is in crisis and without support, many organizations will go under. Without cultural organizations, the impact of this crisis will be deeper, the recovery will take longer. There is no recovery without the Arts.

Lynn Parkerson
Founder and Artistic Director
Brooklyn Ballet

BROOKLYN BALLET



Danielle Martinez, MS 915 CASA student dances through the school hallway

## Brooklyn Ballet's CASA Program

### *Elevate*

Elevate, Brooklyn Ballet's dance residency in under-resourced public schools reached more than 14,000 Brooklyn children since 2005. Elevate uses the innovative "Language of Dance" (LOD) system to teach children ballet vocabulary and achieve a physical and intellectual understanding of dance. Ballet training combined with LOD provides children from under-resourced public schools a way to develop self-confidence, self-discipline and critical thinking. At the conclusion of the residency, Brooklyn Ballet offers talented Elevate students 50–100% scholarships to attend Brooklyn Ballet School in Downtown Brooklyn. In this way

we stay connected to our public school students and see their continued growth over time. Indeed, Elevate has brought us some of our most talented students– one of our first Elevate graduates now has a professional contract with Sofia National Opera Ballet - Bulgaria, another dances with Norwegian National Ballet, and a third has joined Houston Ballet.

**Brooklyn Ballet currently runs *Elevate* CASA programs at PS 276 in Canarsie, PS 251 in Flatlands, MS 211 in Canarsie, and MS 915 in Downtown Brooklyn**.

Additional Elevate schools include **PS 243 in Weeksville, PS 307 in Vinegar Hill, PS 58 in Carroll Gardens, and the Dock School in Dumbo,** supported by the NYC Department of Education, PTA support and private foundations.

*Studying at Brooklyn Ballet has enriched my life. I believe Brooklyn Ballet will set me up for studying dance at a performing arts high school and in college. Dance motivates me to work hard and do my best in school. Brooklyn Ballet has helped me improve my tech- nique and increased my love for dance. My experience and participation in The Brooklyn Nutcracker was amazing. It was my first big production. It made me want to dance more than ever. It showed me that if you work at dance you can do anything.*

-Danielle Martinez, Current Elevate Student, MS 915

*The CASA program offers us the opportunity to meet the needs of students' varied inter- ests, learning styles and ongoing need for exposure to new experiences. Arts program- ming provides important opportunities of creative outlet for young people, developing personally through self-expression, while learning the values to focus, persistence, communication and teamwork.*

–Leslyn Ward, Assistant Principal, PS 276







**Brooklyn Ballet - 160 Schermerhorn Street | Brooklyn, NY 11201 | 718-246-0146, 718-781-1726 | www.brooklynballet.org**

## *The Brooklyn Nutcracker*

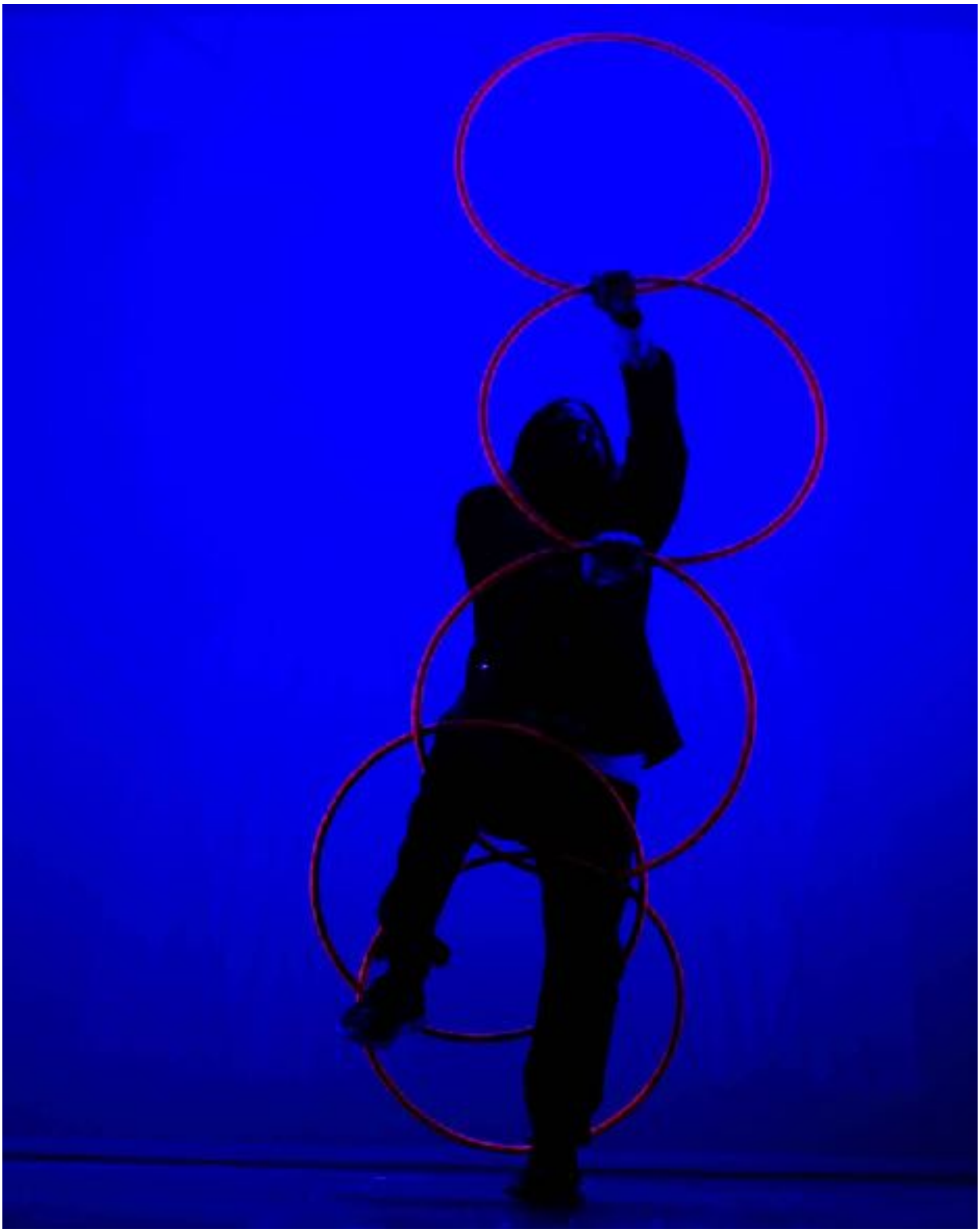
**made possible by a Cultural Immigrant Initiative grant**

Last year, *The Brooklyn Nutcracker* **at the Kings Theatre** was a huge success, bringing exciting multi-cultural dance forms to the stage, reaching a over 4,000 audience members. Our community matinee reached over 1,000 children and adults from districts all across the borough, who attended at low or no cost. Attendees included public school students, senior center members, foster children, and adults with intellectual and other disabilities. Our public performance brought over 3,000 audience members to Flatbush, Brooklyn for an unforgettable evening of dance The production seamlessly integrates ballet, baroque, hip-hop, African-fused modern dance, Middle Eastern dance, Classical Chinese dance, Spanish flamenco, and Native American hoop dancing. **Radical inclusivity** is one of the hallmarks of our organization, and *The Brooklyn Nutcracker* features a cast of 35 dancers; 85% are dancers of color including immigrant dancers from Brazil, Cuba, Trinidad, China, and Japan, as well as over 30 young dancers from Brooklyn Ballet School.

*"Conceived by Brooklyn Ballet's founder and Artistic Director Lynn Parkerson, this new twist on an old favorite transforms familiar characters and scenes to represent the diverse and vibrant cultures of Brooklyn... [the dancers are] "joyful and buoyant", "both laser-sharp and effortlessly relaxed," and "each in their own style, yet in ideal harmony."*

*- Cecily Placenti, The Dance Enthusiast, Dec 22, 2018*

**Brooklyn Ballet - 160 Schermerhorn Street | Brooklyn, NY 11201 | 718-246-0146, 718-781-1726 | www.brooklynballet.org**











*The Brooklyn Nutcracker* 2018 Photos by Anna Kuzmina




**Cultural Plan For Recovery (CPR)**
**TOTAL ASK: $70M**
New York City's cultural community and those it employs and serves continue to grapple with the economic losses COVID brought. There is no recovery without the arts, and the below package ensures the City invests in this community in an equitable way that best reaches those people, programs, and organizations who need support and can lead the sector forward.

Restoration of funding historically added at Adoption split 50/50 between Cultural Institution Group (CIG) and Cultural Development Fund (CDF) supported program groups with a carve-out for CUNY Corps. This demonstrates a restoration of $20.2M from FY21 and an additional $9.8 investment to bring this funding back to prior levels.

**$30M – City Council Request**

Restore and baseline Coalition Theaters of Color Restore Cultural Initiatives
CASA - Culture After School Adventure Cultural Immigrant Initiative

GFS - Ghetto Film School accelerator program model Su-CASA
Art as Catalyst for Change
A Greener NYC

**$15M - Cultural Equity Fund**

Fund created as a way of investing in BIPOC led / BIPOC serving cultural organizations in order to establish better equity in arts and cultural funding.

**$10M - Funding for Non-Profit Performing Arts**

To keep them solvent while they remain shuttered and to support their additional cost when they can reopen.

**$10M - Relief Grants**

Available to cultural organizations of every size to help them stabilize and recover from the economic devastation of COVID - determined by zip codes that had the highest infection and highest death tolls.

**$5M - Support to the Department of Cultural Affairs**

Added to DCLA's budget to increase its capacity to support this investment in New York City's arts and cultural community.

Testimony by Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A
May 25, 2021, 10:00 AM
NYC's Committee on Finance

Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A's (Brooklyn A) mission is to advance social and economic justice and community empowerment through innovative, collaborative, neighborhood-based legal representation and advocacy. Brooklyn A represents low- and moderate-income individuals and families throughout NYC. Our clients live in rapidly-gentrifying neighborhoods where many residents and small business owners have been displaced or are facing displacement and harassment. For over half a century, Brooklyn A has provided high-quality, low-barrier neighborhood based legal services to individuals, families, not-for-profit community-based organizations (CBOs), community development corporations (CDCs), coalitions and small business owners, interested in developing and sustaining vibrant, healthy communities.

Brooklyn A needs maximum budgetary support in FY22 as we continue to proactively prepare and strategize with our clients communities for the coming lifts of the eviction and foreclosure moratoriums so that they will be able to stay safely in their homes and businesses. It is more important than ever for us to maintain and strengthen the safety nets in our city. Access to high-quality free legal services and advocacy is a crucial part of this equation. Our work happens through the following programs, which together fight displacement and builds community resilience.

Preserving Affordable Housing

Many low-income New Yorkers have lost or experienced a decrease in income related to COVID-19 shutdowns making it hard or impossible to pay rent. The pandemic and the affordable housing crisis have compounded to exacerbate the difficulties faced by low-to-moderate income individuals and families throughout New York City.

In response, Brooklyn A's Preserving Affordable Housing Program is providing legal advocacy to prevent illegal evictions and harassment, and to advocate for repairs and restoration of essential services through e-filings and virtual court appearances; administers virtual workshops on tenants' rights; organizes tenant associations to build collective power and support each other through the pandemic; and assists tenants to receive rental assistance through special COVID-19 rent-relief programs and one-shot deals. Alice is the tenant association president at Spring Creek Gardens in East NY. Alice's advocacy alongside other members of the tenant association and Brooklyn A has included getting their property owner to make critical repairs and pushing back against the displacement of efforts against long-term community members.

BKA is requesting $525,000 in FY22 funds. An investment in Brooklyn A's Preserving Affordable Housing Program would enable Brooklyn A to assist thousands of renters access free high-quality, low barrier legal assistance; access rental assistance through

special COVID-19 rent-relief programs and one-shot deals; host regular workshops and events to educate community members about their rights, explain legal and other options, and ensure that members of the community know that help is available; help low-income tenants and their families secure repairs and essential services so that they are not forced into the streets because of uninhabitable living conditions; and contest illegally high rents, which slows the exponential rise in future rents and thereby enhances affordability.

Foreclosure Prevention

A significant number of low- and moderate-income and BIPOC homeowners in NYC have either lost employment or their income has been significantly reduced due to the COVID-19 crisis. Mortgage delinquencies of at least 90 days have risen to the highest level in 10 years. This is resulting in widespread defaults on mortgage payments and a potential mass wave of foreclosure proceedings. There is an increasing prevalence of predatory lending, deed theft, and other illegal practices that particularly target elderly homeowners and BIPOC homeowners.

In response to the displacement pressures, Brooklyn A's foreclosure prevention team is representing homeowners in legal proceedings to prevent foreclosure; educating homeowners on their rights and responsibilities concerning moratoriums and relief available for financial hardship; and assisting homeowners to apply for bankruptcy as a tool to stop the foreclosure process. For example, John and Starlett are first-time, first-generation homeowners in Laurelton, Queens who after facing medical issues, defaulted on their mortgage. Brooklyn A worked with them for several years to file for bankruptcy and prevent the foreclosure of their family's home.

Brooklyn A is requesting $130,000 in FY22 discretionary funds to support its foreclosure prevention work. This investment would enable BKA to increase its level of legal representation and advocacy, which is desperately needed to prevent New Yorkers from losing their homes to foreclosure, deed theft or scams in the face of a catastrophic health and economic crisis. This funding will mean increased protection of economic equity for homeowners, particularly those who are seniors and minorities.

Exempting Homes from Tax Lien Sale

Another way many homowners lose their property and wealth is through the tax lien sale. Brooklyn A is requesting $30,000 in FY22 discretionary funds for its exempting homes from tax lien sale work. An investment in this program would enable BKA to increase its level of outreach and education, which is desperately needed to prevent New Yorkers from potentially losing their homes due to tax liens in the midst of a catastrophic health and economic crisis. This funding will enable Brooklyn A to further protect the economic equity for homeowners, particularly those who are seniors and BIPOC.

Small Business Assistance

The pandemic has caused more than 2,800 businesses in New York City to permanently close since March 1, 2020 and with these closures over half a million jobs have been lost.[1] Small businesses represent roughly 98 percent of its employers and provide jobs to more than 3 million people – half of NYC's workforce.[2] Moreover, NYC's non-profits account for over 17.8% of all private sector jobs, contributing over $77.7 billion a year to the city's economy.

Brooklyn A provides transactional legal counsel to nonprofits and small businesses that sustain and empower low-income communities. We help small businesses on non-litigation commercial lease matters such as lease review and negotiation. We assist community based organizations (CBOs) with an array of development and operational projects to sustain affordable housing developments, community health centers, and schools. Providing accessible, high quality legal counsel is a critical element to the neighborhood-based and -controlled community economic development process. For example, Kiana is the owner of a soul food restaurant in Prospect Lefferts Gardens, Brooklyn. Since the beginning of the pandemic, her business has served 2,000 free meals a week to community members. Brooklyn A successfully negotiated her commercial lease with her landlord and a construction contract with a general contractor so she could stay open and make necessary repairs.

Brooklyn A is requesting $175,000 in FY22 discretionary funds for its small business assistance. This investment would support Brooklyn A's representation of the small businesses and CBOs that provide vital direct services to low-income residents throughout NYC, such as developing affordable housing and providing community-based health care and childcare services. Our legal support ensures the success and sustainability of our client's projects, organizations, and businesses.

Due to the multiple crises we are navigating, we know that the demand for our services will be higher than in previous years. Brooklyn A needs maximum support from our champions to meet the need in FY22. These funding streams are crucial to our ability to sustain our work and continue to be a trusted resource, especially at this moment, when our communities critically need access to free, high quality legal services and advocacy that could very well be the difference between losing or keeping their businesses and homes.

[1] https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/03/nyregion/nyc-small-businesses-closing-coronavirus.html
[2] https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/03/nyregion/nyc-small-businesses-closing-coronavirus.html

**Finance Committee of the City Council on the FY 22 Budget - Written Testimony**
**May 27, 2021**

**PLEASE SEE THE BRONX ARTS AND CULTURE COMMUNITY**
New York City's cultural community and those it employs and supports continue to grapple with the economic losses wrought by COVID. There is no recovery without the arts, and only with continued and increased funding can we be ensured the City invests in this community in an equitable way that best reaches the people, programs, and organizations who need enrichment and can lead the sector forward.

Specifically, the Bronx Children's Museum (BxCM or Museum) needs program and operational support to survive. COVID hit us hard. We are about to open our brand new building, and our sustainability is now at risk. The next few years are absolutely critical to our survival. We have received ample capital support for our building and a new electric bus but we are now in need of operational support more than ever. We are not a CIG. Currently, we only receive $24,150 in CDF funds from the City and $110,000 in discretionary and Initiative funding for our after school and school outreach programs from elected officials whose seats are turning over next year. We have absolutely no City funding for programs in our new building or for operations. Our budget this year is $1.3 million and next year it will climb to $2.2 million. Please fight for our survival as we fight for our community.

**WHO WE ARE**
Founded in 2005, Bronx Children's Museum is a new kind of multicultural, community-based children's museum operating "with and without walls" and geared to those from infancy through fourth grade. For the past 10 years, we have been developing a city-owned historic site in the South Bronx right on the Harlem River and Mill Pond Park.

We are already a cultural and economic anchor in the South Bronx, the poorest congressional district in the United States. We are actually at the center of a gigantic development project near the Yankee Stadium with several new mixed housing developments, several schools, and the Universal Hip Hop Museum as well as the upcoming soccer stadium complex.

We are here with you today to underscore the importance of funding for all cultural organizations in New York City -- and particularly in The Bronx: the most under-resourced borough in the City.

**Without your leadership and help,** we will have to literally end our outreach programs and we will be unable to reach a new generation of our youngest and most vulnerable children. **However, with your support,** we can continue to meet the needs of our borough's youngest constituents regardless of age, ability, or geographic location in a safe and sanitary way. *Culture is critical to community well-being, especially now, dealing with these crises.*

The Bronx Children's Museum is a harbinger for cultural organizations, housing, and large retail hubs. An example of this is the new Universal Hip Hop Museum located in the same park we will occupy by early 2022. During the past 10 years, we have worked with local residents and employed dozens of local artists, cultural and environmental educators. We partner with local community-based organizations, schools, and business centers and major developments in the vicinity of the Museum. Job opportunities and partnerships will continue once the doors of the Museum open. With funding from New York City, we will be able to play a significant part in The Bronx's and New York's economic recovery.

**WE WERE ON A ROLL PRE-COVID**

The Museum engaged more than 16,000 children and caregivers annually without a building and we were appearing throughout The Bronx at 25 school/afterschool programs and at 85 fairs and festivals/public events with and without our iconic purple bus which contains an interactive diorama of the Bronx waterways. Everything was full steam ahead.

The Museum was only four months away from completing construction on a city-owned building, a former powerhouse in the South Bronx, and had just learned that we were granted the monies to procure a new electric bus to replace our beloved 34-year-old one, when the pandemic struck and the world changed for all of us.

Due to the devastating effects of the virus, the Museum is now expected to conduct our building soft opening, with COVID-safe interactive exhibits in early 2022. Our facility, located just steps away from Gateway Mall and Yankee Stadium, is shaped like a whimsical castle. We plan on seeing nearly 5,000 children in 2022, 10,000 in 2023 and gradually increasing those numbers as funding is secured.

Mill Pond Park, on which the facility stands, will offer an excellent outdoor classroom space for the Museum to access and use as a further extension of our walls. Through continued innovative mobile and remote programming, BxCM will engage children outside the building in hands-on arts and science experiences and programs throughout the borough—at community-based organizations, schools, shelters, libraries, parks and festivals. When our new electric bus is procured in 2023, we will begin the process of outfitting it with a state-of-the-art waterways diorama with STEAM and maker experiences. We should be back on the road with our new bus by 2024.

All programs and experiences will be tailored to the Museum's constituency and strive to create stronger families, stronger communities—and a better city for all. BxCM is publicly and privately funded. Our admission prices will be nominal and in line with our visitors' economic capacity.

**NEED**

BxCM is one of a few cultural institutions in the Bronx geared solely toward families with young children, many of whom have been disproportionately hit by the virus, and cannot afford to go to, or would not normally, visit a museum. The Bronx is also the only borough in NYC without a children's museum or the equivalent. Children's museums are recognized by early childhood educators, cultural and museum associations and the mental health community as impactful nurturing spaces of learning through play that foster imagination and creativity, as well as offering relief and a space to just be. According to mental health experts, the Museum will be needed more than ever by the children and families of the Bronx to help recover from the trauma they are experiencing now and will continue to feel for years to come.

Systemic income inequality, food deserts, poor healthcare, fewer hospitals and deteriorating housing has harmed our borough of predominantly Black and Brown residents. In fact, the Bronx ranks the lowest of all 62 state counties in quality of life, health behaviors, availability of clinical care, social/economic factors and physical environment, according to the NY County Health Rankings Annual Report. One sobering statistic: The Bronx has had more COVID cases and deaths than any other borough—and far fewer resources. (Example: the Bronx has one physician for every 1,770 people vs one for 750 in Manhattan.)

**PROGRAMMING: PIVOTING TO REMOTE**

In the past year, the Bronx Children's Museum has:

- Reached out to Bronx children and families to learn how we could be most impactful.
- Pivoted to virtual programming; dramatically increased our social media presence and developed/honed new skills, especially video creation and digital outreach.
- Made a concerted effort to reach children without devices or connectivity by developing relationships with BronxNet TV and PBS Camp.
- Created our newest program, Nature of the Bronx. It is a comprehensive STEAM and arts based school program that is tailored to grade level and CORE requirements, offers lesson plans and training for teachers, includes live Museum educator-led Zoom classroom instruction and offers "LaunchBoxes"--arts and science supplies distributed to every child in our program ensuring active participation. Participation to date: 1,100 students and teachers in more than 50 classroom settings.
- Produced and assembled "LaunchBoxes" which include such art/science supplies as construction and watercolor paper, markers and crayons, scissors, glue, pipette, color tablets, shaving cream, cups and spoons, student worksheets and a BxCM Scientist- or Artist-in Training button.
- Planned, If funded, to continue our Dream Big Summer Enrichment program, featuring Jerome LaMaar, a Bronxite and artist who is creating a high-tech digital interactive exhibit called Bronxtopia. It is a hands-free, digital playground that encourages kids to move and groove in sync with sassy, fashion-forward animal avatars to music and dances that are part of the essence of the Bronx including salsa, merengue, and hip hop.

**COMMUNITY IMPACT: OUR FINGERS ON THE PULSE**

In addition to the programming and supplies provided, The Bronx Children's Museum has had an active presence in the community in the following ways:

- Surveyed caregivers and educators to gather feedback on what educational resources that were needed most while schools were remote--and refined our offerings based on ongoing feedback.
- Distributed masks in cooperation with the Mayor's Office.
- Shared information with our constituency about the importance of registering to vote, completing the census, bringing children to their medical practitioners for well visits and standard vaccines, information on the COVID vaccine, and more. This has included conducting/posting interviews with local health care professionals.
- Created a special social-emotional learning booklist, in partnership with two Bronx bookstores, to help families navigate these difficult times.
- Became a part of a quickly emerging "think tank" of cultural organizations, museums, and children's museums.

**CURRENT EMERGENCY FINANCIAL NEEDS**

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Museum launched an emergency/naming campaign. We must raise $525,000 in emergency money by Q4 2021 and $2.5 million by 2023 in order to open a vibrant, fun-filled sustainable museum. This includes an anticipated $100,000 of COVID-preventative measures costs. The emergency campaign needs are above and beyond the funds required to support a general operating budget of nearly $1.3 million in 2021 and $2.2 million the following year.

The BxCM is not a CIG and does not receive ANY operational support from the City. We also do not charge required fees for anything we do currently. Once the building opens, we will charge only very nominal, affordable fees. The City and State's support of arts and culture programs is crucial to the Bronx Children's Museum and to all arts and culture organizations that have great influence on the people and families in their communities and beyond, particularly in the wake of COVID-19.

The Bronx Children's Museum is already trusted in The Bronx, which will be critical as the community turns from pandemic to recovery. Pediatric mental health experts have shared with us that it is absolutely essential to the well-being of children and the quality of life of all people living in the City to not cut City cultural funding streams. We all rely on this funding to serve our communities and ours is quite large! We are currently able to offer programs that are free to the public through funding through the City. We are a lifeline for our community.

We will always be a Museum with and without walls, committed to being FULLY ACCESSIBLE to all children. Please rest assured, our space and our exhibits will be safe.

**Without your leadership and help,** we will have to literally end our outreach programs and we will be unable to reach a new generation of our youngest and most vulnerable children. **However, with your support,** we can continue to meet the needs of our borough's youngest constituents regardless of age, ability, or geographic location in a safe and sanitary way. *Culture is critical to community well-being, especially now, dealing with these crises.*

Thank you very much for your consideration *during these unprecedented times.*

**Arts and culture is a central driver of New York's economy, an anchor to its communities! We need your support!**

**WE SEE YOU: PLEASE SEE ARTS AND CULTURE.**

In Community,



Carla Precht
Executive Director

The Bronx Defenders Redefining public defense.

**New York City Council**
**Budget for Fiscal Year 2022**
**Committee on Finance**
**March 25, 2021**
**Testimony of The Bronx Defenders**
**By Sarah Deri Oshiro, Managing Director, Immigration**

As the Managing Director of the Immigration Practice at The Bronx Defenders, I submit this written testimony to the Committee on Finance with gratitude for the Council's consistent, principled support of immigration legal services. The Bronx Defenders specifically acknowledges the efforts of Immigration Chair Menchaca and Finance Chair Dromm in their unwavering dedication to supporting New York City's vibrant immigrant communities. As our testimony at the preliminary budget hearing in March indicated, we have respectfully requested level funding for the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) in FY 22, in the amount of 5.533 million per organization, or 16.6 million total, to continue providing our critical services during this time of great need.

Nineteen years ago, The Bronx Defenders embraced the model of holistic defense by embedding immigration services within a public defender office. Our robust immigration practice today consists of over fifty attorneys, social workers, advocates and administrative professionals. We provide deportation defense in both detained and non-detained court. We also provide advice and guidance to our non-citizen clients and their attorneys and advocates with Criminal and Family Courts cases, to avoid or mitigate negative immigration consequences. We also represent our clients in affirmative applications before U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to protect or secure their status in this country. Our advocates provide these services within three related but distinct programs: representation of detained people through NYIFUP, our "*Padilla*" practice, and general representation of Bronx community residents before the Immigration agency and courts.

Two themes punctuated our testimony at the budget hearings last Spring. First, New York City had become a target of the Trump administration due, in large part, to our city's commitment to protecting immigrant community members. This targeting implicated our ability to advocate for our clients family unification and stability. Second, for low-income immigrant communities, the COVID-19 pandemic unleashed harrowing physical and mental health consequences and economic devastation. In response, we pivoted our advocacy efforts to focus on securing release of as many clients as possible from the tinderbox of the unsafe, unsanitary jails where Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detains New Yorkers. And we were largely successful, thanks in large part to the Council's continued support of our programs. Since the start of the pandemic, The Bronx Defenders and the other two NYIFUP providers have secured freedom from ICE custody of over 240 people.

Today, there are glimmers of hope that we did not see one year ago. Our federal immigration policy is no longer driven by the overt xenophobia and racism of the prior administration. Vaccines protecting against COVID-19 have been rolled out to many people, and we are

optimistic that the pandemic itself will recede in time. However, there is more work to be done today on behalf of immigrant New Yorkers than there was last year.

The immigration courts that process the deportation cases of people detained by ICE never stopped running throughout the pandemic. Despite securing the release of dozens of clients last spring, when the rates of COVID-19 infection peaked, others remained incarcerated during the entirety of the past year. As such, we continued to represent dozens of **detained clients** in their deportation proceedings at the Varick Street Immigration Court, despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, including closure of many private and public institutions. For example, we had to largely meet and interview our detained clients, and discuss highly sensitive information, such as their fear of persecution or torture in another country via phone or video-conference. The technology platforms that support this communication often fail, and/or lack confidentiality. Obtaining critical evidence to support our clients' claims for relief became and continues to be more challenging than ever, as institutions such as courts, hospitals, schools, social services offices and treatment centers manage their own shut-downs, short-staffing, and restrictions on programming they can offer the public. And the detained trials have become even more difficult as our lawyers are literally phoning in to appear at trials for their clients' lives.

The three NYIFUP providers also represent over 1,000 **non-detained** people in removal proceedings, and while the courts for non-detained immigrants ceased to hold hearings in March of 2020, these pauses were temporary, and due to the erratic timing of the announcements regarding the closures, our program staff continued to prepare their cases as if the court would reopen any time. Moreover, we learned last week that the non-detained immigration courts will formally reopen for trials beginning on **July 6, 2021**. There will certainly be a rush to reschedule the hearings that were postponed in the preceding sixteen months on top of the hearings that had already been scheduled for this date and after.

Despite the new political era in Washington, the laws and policies promulgated by the previous administration are largely still in effect today. These legal obstacles make all of our client advocacy more challenging and time-consuming since the pathways to a successful outcome are still blocked by the barriers erected by Trump. This is particularly true for our many clients seeking asylum in this county who are stymied by restrictive case law published by the Board of Immigration Appeals and the previous Attorneys General, draconian regulations designed to impose procedural limitations on how, when and how they can seek relief from the courts and agencies, and less meaningful judicial review of agency conduct. Programmatically, the persistence of these Trump era legal obstacles means our staff must litigate cases through lengthy appeals more often than ever before.

While ICE enforcement slowed down during the worst months of the pandemic, there was an uptick in arrests of New Yorkers again starting in the Fall. Indeed, on multiple occasions, our clients have reported that their arrests by ICE began with agents pretending to be officers of the New York Police Department (NYPD) "conducting an investigation". A concerning pattern has emerged in which ICE uses this ruse and exploits the willingness of many New Yorkers to assist law enforcement's investigation of alleged crimes. Unfortunately, and despite the grave consequences of ICE detention amidst a global pandemic, New York City has not taken concrete

steps to prohibit this practice by the federal government or investigate the involvement of the NYPD itself. Moreover, despite a law that significantly limits the Department of Corrections' ability to honor ICE's detainers on incarcerated people, we continue to see instances in which the City takes advantage of loopholes to facilitate transfers of immigrants from their custody into ICE's.

In addition to the day-to-day litigation and support of our clients facing detention and deportation, there is a growing need for legal support for immigration policy work. The anti-immigrant laws, policies and regulations promulgated over the past four years need to be undone, one by one, and/or counteracted by state and local initiatives. Our staff are in a unique position to educate and advise policy-makers about how to reverse the harms meted by the previous administration and protect immigrant communities.

Moreover, there has been an uptick in requests for advice and counsel from current and former clients who seek information about the changing immigration laws and proposals. People see the references to President Biden's plan for immigration reform and understandably, want to know whether and how it may apply to them or their loved ones. Responding to these requests for information and support from community members places additional pressure on our program staff who are digesting the new information in real time and seeking to dispel misinformation that may be circulating in the community. If Congress passes any immigration reform, such as the United States Citizenship Act of 2021 recently introduced by President Biden, the need for legal services will increase dramatically, and immigration staff would respond yet again to community needs.

Despite the hope offered by a promising vaccine and declining rates of infection, the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over and support for our immigration programs fighting for the safety and freedom of our detained clients is more important than ever. Detention by ICE is still a life-or-death situation for every client. ICE has shown callous disregard for the wellbeing of immigrants in its custody and ICE detention served as a superspreading force.[1] The threat of COVID underscores the urgency of the representation and requires aggressive advocacy efforts in every client's case. Moreover, our clients, their families, community members and staff continue to experience a cascade of losses -- loss of loved ones, of stable employment, of community support and companionship, of childcare, or a safety net. These losses take their toll, collectively and individually, and underscore the need for successful programming that prioritizes family unification and stability. Providing lawyers and legal advocates to immigrants who are at risk of deportation, and in particular, the programs that are funded by New York City such as NYIFUP, keeps families together and makes communities stronger.

Our immigration programs play an essential role in the lives of New Yorkers in crisis, particularly the residents of the South Bronx who were at one point living in the epicenter of the pandemic. Given the serious and ongoing needs of the clients we serve, The Bronx Defenders respectfully

[1] William D. Lopez, Nolan Kline, Alana M. W. LeBrón, Nicole L. Novak, Maria-Elena De Trinidad Young, Gregg Gonsalves, Ranit Mishori, Basil A. Safi, and Ian M. Kysel, 2021, Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in Immigration Detention Centers Requires the Release of Detainees, American Journal of Public Health 111, 110_115, https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2020.305968

requests level funding from the Council for FY 22 in the amount of 5.533 million per organization, as part of the 16.6 million total NYIFUP budget.

**To:** New York City Council Committee on Finance

**Purposes:** Enhancing CCNSF to $5 million for nonprofits of color – communities of color + Enhancing Access Health to $3.25 million

Good Evening, my name is Joyce Ma and I am the Contracts and Grants Coordinator of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF). CACF is a lead partner of both Citywide Initiatives, the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund (CCNSF), and Access Health NYC. I am speaking in support of both of these critical initiatives, which build the capacity of community organizations serving communities of color and immigrant communities in need across New York City. As New York City continues to recover and open after a very difficult year, our community-based organizations must be able to support the upcoming challenges, needs, and concerns of all New Yorkers. Thank you, Finance Chair Dromm, Speaker Johnson, and the esteemed members of the City Council for allowing us the opportunity to testify.

Since 1986, CACF has been the nation's only pan-Asian children and families' advocacy organization fighting for improved and equitable policies, systems, funding, and services to support those in need. **CACF also leads the 15% & Growing Campaign, a group of nearly 50 Asian led and serving organizations that work together to ensure that New York City's budget protects the most vulnerable Asian Pacific American (APA) New Yorkers.** Our campaign members employ thousands of New Yorkers and serve hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers.

We would like to thank New York City Council for the $2.5 million in continued support for the CCNSF in the FY'21 City Budget. As this initiative has grown to serve over 250 community-based organizations across New York City, **we respectfully ask for your continued support for the CCNSF to enhance the initiative to $5 million allocation** in the FY 2022 budget so we can support even more nonprofit organizations in need. Throughout the COVID 19 pandemic, small community organizations have been on the front line reaching and supporting those who are most impacted, including communities of color, those who are limited English proficient, those who are undocumented, uninsured, or under-insured, among others. And in the Asian American community, CBOs have increasingly taken on the role of supporting many in our communities that are experiencing anti-Asian violence related to racist scapegoating around COVID-19. Yet, small CBOs continue to be under-resourced in their work.

Seven years ago, CACF, Hispanic Federation (HF), and New York Urban League (NYUL), along with the Asian American Federation and Black Agency Executives, came together to strategize around capacity-building support to Black, Latinx, and Asian-led nonprofits working on the frontlines in communities throughout our five boroughs. Together, the organizations that City Council supports through CCNSF are serving millions of vulnerable New Yorkers. And there are more nonprofits in communities of color that need this critical funding.

Similarly Access Health NYC has supported and built up over 30 organization's capacities to provide health outreach and education to uninsured and under-insured, limited-English

proficient, and otherwise vulnerable New Yorkers. We are thankful to Health Chair Mark Levine's ongoing support of this initiative. And now as New Yorkers attempt to shift back to school and work with the City opening up, and especially with the inequitable distribution of vaccines we are seeing, the work to support accessing health services will become extremely critical. **We are asking the City Council to enhance Access Health NYC in total to $3.25 Million.** Access Health NYC has been crucial as a funding source that allowed for flexibility for community-based innovation, as organizations adapted their programs to support their communities shifting and growing needs during the pandemic.

Especially during crisis, such as a time like the current COVID-19 pandemic, nonprofits are the most vulnerable in lacking a safety net, as they continue serving low-income, older, marginalized, immigrant New Yorkers, on top of living and being members of these communities experiencing vulnerability and loss during COVID-19. From providing seniors with check-ins and meals to combat social alienation to equipping survivors and victims of gender-based violence with counseling, and those in need with tools for housing, job placement, and economic security, and now, supporting Asian American communities during the increase of violence and racial scapegoating around COVID-19 -- Access Health NYC and CCNSF funding help strengthen these lifelines to enable New Yorkers to prevail against the pandemic.

We need this investment into our communities -- the funds are crucial right now. In CACF's work both as a lead organization for Access Health NYC and as the administrator of CCNSF awards to Asian American CBOs, we have learned that over the past year, organizations have been struggling as they continue providing vital services and support to communities. They are facing high levels of turnover in staffing and leadership; difficulties with staff burnout; outdated data and information systems, which are crucial to moving systems online and providing remote programming; and challenges in fundraising during this pandemic due in large part to the economic downturn and lack of opportunities.

**Investing $5 million in the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund and $3.25 Million in Access Health NYC will ensure that nonprofits embedded in communities of color and in otherwise hard-to-reach communities, will be able to more effectively provide the critical services necessary to properly address the diverse and growing needs of New York City's diverse communities.**

**Thank you for your time and support!**

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

**Committee on Finance Remote Hearing**
**May 25, 2021 at 10:00AM**

Good morning. 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 Dromm and members of the Committee on Finance 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. 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.

This year, with an unprecedented influx of funding from the federal government, New York City has the opportunity to pass a truly equitable budget that addresses the needs of those most marginalized, whose struggles have only been exposed and exacerbated by the pandemic. At the same time, the City has the responsibility to develop a plan to sustain investments made when federal funding is used up. This written testimony covers two topics that are vital to the recourse and recovery of Asian American New Yorkers, particularly those most marginalized, and specifically centers the needs of our students and families:

1. Education budget priorities put together by the New Yorkers for Racially Just Public Schools coalition, of which CACF is a steering committee member
2. Recovery and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers - a Citywide Initiative developed by CACF's 15% and Growing Campaign

## 1. New Yorkers for Racially Just Public Schools - New York City Education Budget Demands

CACF is a steering committee member for New Yorkers for Racially Just Public Schools (RJPS), a multiracial citywide education justice coalition aimed at centering racial equity in policy and budget decisions for public education. In collaboration with many equity-centered organizations and parents, we developed a comprehensive list of budget priorities necessary to ensuring that

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all students, including Asian American students, are safe, supported, and welcomed into their school communities in the fall. These priorities can be found at the end of this document.

Asian American students comprise 16.2% of the NYC student population, they attend over 95% of our public schools, make up almost 1 in 4 ELLs (over 35,000 are ELLs), and over 15,000 have an IEP. The majority of Asian American students in NYC have stayed in remote learning, even as in-person options were made available to them. Many parents remain fearful of sending their children back to school for a variety of reasons, including COVID worries and concerns about anti-Asian violence. They also continue to share with us that language access at schools is incredibly inconsistent, with some schools providing these services well and others neglecting to inform families about it at all - and with the often confusing updates from the DOE, these language barriers become even more of a problem. Parents have told us that they need to see more investment in ELL and ESL services. Students have consistently emphasized that they need to see themselves reflected in their curricula - this is a huge motivating factor for them. And this demand for visibility extends to the forms they and their families fill out, which they report often do not allow them to identify themselves accurately.

We are pleased to see investments in 3-K For All, academic and digital literacy supports, restorative justice and social emotional learning, expansion to 400 community schools with at least one in every district, special education services, early childhood special education, Summer Rising, and CUNY Summer Youth Employment in the Executive Budget - and thrilled that our schools will finally see 100% of Fair Student Funding dollars. These priorities will support all students, including Asian American students, as they begin school in the fall in the wake of the pandemic.

**However, in many areas, the Executive Budget either does not provide adequate or sustainable funding, or entirely overlooks vitally important investments. Below, we list some key priorities that will benefit Asian American students immensely, and, by extension, all students:**

- At least $500,000 for data disaggregation at DOE
- $1 billion for culturally responsive-sustaining education
- $177 million to expand access to social and emotional supports
- $350 million to support English Language Learners and immigrant families, including ELL students with disabilities

Our schools, organizations, and young people need investment in culturally responsive and language accessible education services, without which many immigrant students 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 students, 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. Once again, for the first time, the City will have the funding to provide these supports. We need to be responsive to our students' needs and invest in the resources they and their families continue to emphasize as critical.

**Data Disaggregation:**

**$500,000 for proper data collection and disaggregation of students' ethnic groups to identify and address inequities across ethnic groups.** Funding will support:

- Changing internal data collection processes
    - Stakeholder engagement on how best to collect data
    - Collecting data at multiple application points, to ensure that we capture the broadest number of students who may enter DOE at different times and avoid waiting years for better data (which may be the consequence of restricting data collection to when students enroll in 3K, pre-K, or kindergarten)
- Internal rollout and training for staff on new data collection policies and procedures
- Public service announcement series and community engagement explaining changes in data being requested and why it will benefit families
- Providing physical forms when necessary with new demographic data questions

**We are calling for at least $500,000 for DOE to fund proper data collection and disaggregation of data into students' ethnic groups to identify and address inequities across groups, ultimately to fight the model minority myth.** Despite the passage of LL126, Asian American students remain lumped together and averaged out in all consequential DOE data, erasing their rich diversity and rendering the challenges of many pockets of the community invisible, especially those most marginalized. Due to the poor implementation of LL126 and the fact that the voluntary demographic data form it requires does not collect information regarding students that would be most useful, CACF has been meeting with DOE regularly to collaborate on how to ensure better data collection for the past few months. DOE has expressed that better data collection and disaggregation are priorities for them and are looking to adopt policies and procedures that make the most sense for the agency. From these conversations, we understand that funding specifically designated for data collection and disaggregation is necessary for DOE to properly roll out new processes. We developed this budget priority in collaboration with them.

By obscuring the individual, unique experiences of many Asian American subgroups, the model minority myth perpetuates the falsehood that Asian American students comprise a monolith naturally successful in education. Clear, transparent data disaggregation dispels this myth and allows for the opportunity to recognize and target Asian American students' needs, which have

too long been unheard. We need DOE to collect and make transparent accurate data and disaggregation of data on the academic outcomes of students (including standardized test scores and graduation rates, among other measures) by ethnicity, gender, home language, ELL status, ability, and socioeconomic status, provide the ability to cross reference between categories, and analyze disparities in these data**.**

When APA students are mentioned, the dominant narrative within education espouses that they are uniformly academically excellent - their grades and standardized test scores are higher than those of students of different races, they are more likely to graduate, and more likely to attend college.[1] This discussion allows the damaging model minority myth to perpetuate, preserving the problematic notion that APA students “have it all together” and diminishing the real needs our students have. It also perpetuates the racist idea that students of color from other backgrounds do not try as hard. At other times, Asian students are simply erased from the narrative entirely. The City must fight against these tendencies by collecting and disaggregating data.

Aggregation, which harmfully implies that the community is a monolith, is a deeply flawed practice, because it overlooks the profound diversity within the APA community and therefore ignores disparities between pockets of our communities. Namely, it erases the experiences of APAs such as English Language Learners, students with disabilities, low-income students, immigrant students (specifically those who are undocumented, refugee, and/or newly arrived), students in temporary housing, students facing homelessness, and students from underrepresented ethnic and language backgrounds, including those with families facing linguistic isolation due to requiring services in low-incidence languages -- all of whom may be experiencing pronounced academic difficulties, but are hidden within aggregated data. Ethnic background and languages spoken - as well as the linkage between the two - are critical data points that need to be captured to give all of our students a voice, and to give the education system the opportunity to address the needs that are uncovered.

To be clear, because we remain completely in the dark about how Asian American students from different backgrounds are doing in New York City and New York State, we must look to data from other states to attempt to ascertain this. From studies that have been conducted in Washington, we know that for the 2013-2014 school year, the graduation rate for Cambodian and Laotian students was below 70 percent, while it was at 95 percent for Japanese and Taiwanese students.[2] Researchers in Washington report that Laotian, Cambodian, and students of other ethnic groups face great structural barriers to their education, but school officials do not notice these disparities and disregard their needs. We fear that similar patterns with APA ethnic groups may be present in NYC, but we still lack the data to fully understand these nuances. As a whole, though, as has

[1] https://www.pnas.org/content/111/23/8416
[2]https://edsource.org/2019/schools-lack-a-clear-view-of-asian-and-pacific-islander-discipline-disparities-study-finds/610189

been the case for other students, one prediction is that the COVID crisis has only caused existing disparities to grow and become more pronounced. It is therefore likely that marginalized pockets of the APA community are experiencing challenges that have exacerbated due to the pandemic. At its core, data disaggregation gives our students a voice on a systemic level - and it is about time we amplify it.

**Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education**

The DOE has deemed culturally responsive-sustaining education (CRSE) essential to students' education but the budget fails to reinforce this with necessary funding to make tangible change. **We demand: 1 billion for CRSE, with at least $600 million of the federal stimulus funds to create a new, culturally responsive curriculum for PreK-12 English Language Arts, as well as funding for a democratically designed ethnic studies course on Asian American history and the history of solidarity among communities of color, and training and professional development to our educators along with building CBO capacity on CRSE and specifically Asian American histories and contributions.** CRSE is how we can educate and honor all communities, especially the contributions of Asian Americans, who have been overwhelmingly invisible in our curricula. We also ask for the launch of an Ethnic Studies course, designed by NYC youth, educators, parents and community members, that covers key elements of Asian American history and the history of solidarity among BIPOC communities that would be accessible to all New Yorkers, and adopted in New York City public schools.

Asian Pacific American students in NYC are incredibly diverse, consisting of over 40 ethnicities, tens of languages and religions, and a multitude of cultures and immigration experiences. Yet despite this rich diversity, our students remain overwhelmingly invisible in our curricula - key figures and histories of Asians in America are excluded, Asian authors and characters are virtually unrepresented, and Asian countries are often exoticized. Asian and/or bilingual educators, counselors, and social workers remain underrepresented as well. The consequences are significant: students are discouraged from bringing their full selves into the classroom, and really are lied to - told that Asian American histories don't matter, or not supported in unlearning internalized white supremacist ideas and anti-Blackness. Moreover, racial stereotypes including the perpetual foreigner syndrome and model minority myth continue to be reinforced.

Ultimately, the assumptions and prejudice that students can absorb when schools neglect CRSE can result in the perpetuation of the kinds of violence our community has faced since Asians first began immigrating here, and that we have seen increases in reporting of during the pandemic. This is why in late March, alongside the New Yorkers for Racially Just Public Schools coalition and in partnership with CEJ, CACF held a rally united against anti-Asian violence and white supremacy. We sought to address the root causes of this violence, which included calling for real investments in CRSE to reject racism and dismantle white supremacy.

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Our schools have a responsibility to deliver this. APA students and families deserve to truly belong in classrooms, be treated as whole people, they deserve visibility and understanding, to see themselves honored and represented, and they deserve to learn about the ways in which communities of color have supported one another throughout history, oftentimes paving the way for increased access for APAs. And fundamentally, all students deserve this, for the transformation of schools and for a more just society. CRSE is shown to benefit all students socially, emotionally, and academically. The advantages are profound - and as our students continue to handle so much during the pandemic, the need is more urgent than ever.

**Social and Emotional Supports**

**We call for $162 million for new social workers and school counselors to continue working toward a ratio of 1:150 for all schools and 1:50 for high needs schools over the next 5 years, and prioritize hiring from Black, non-white Latinx, and Asian communities. We also call for diverse and multilingual support staff to assess and evaluate young children with disabilities.**

CACF has been convening groups of Asian-identifying immigrant parents to engage in discussions about their hopes, dreams, fears, and challenges surrounding the school system, and many shared their concerns around their children's mental and emotional health through the pandemic, and their ability to socialize. They stressed that attention to these pieces in school is essential. In turn, for our students, the rise of anti-Asian sentiment has only underscored the need for comprehensive, culturally responsive mental health support, which are services that only guidance counselors, social workers, and other individuals specifically prepared to guide students through challenges can provide. We need supportive adults in school buildings who can work with students who have experienced trauma and can ensure that our young people are seen and their fears and challenges are acknowledged.

Like all students, Asian American students need schools to invest in them as whole children, and their worries and struggles must be acknowledged in and out of the classroom, at all levels - from school-level staff to DOE leadership.

We applaud the City's commitment to expand community schools, so that there is one in every district, and specifically targeting districts that have been hit hardest by COVID. **We call for $72 million to be baselined for the additional 140 schools. In addition, as this expansion continues, we reiterate the need to do so in harder to reach Asian communities, and emphasize how imperative it is to expand partnerships with Asian-led and serving CBOs beyond the current organizational partners, which are unable to cover all of the need.** Community schools with APA organizations can provide necessary services and ensure that our students are seen and heard.

**English Language Learners and Multilingual Learners:**

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**We demand $20 million for at least three years for grants to CBOs already well-positioned to support ELLs and immigrant families - many of which are CACF member organizations already providing services to Asian American youth and families. We also demand targeted academic supports for ELLs, which has consistently come up as a concern for families, and a communications plan that prioritizes the needs of limited English proficient families.**

Our member organizations have reported that COVID-19 has had a particularly detrimental impact on English Language Learners. One organization working directly in a school has seen a rise in students coming to their program specifically for academic support. Our partners expressed concern for students who lack access to the kinds of support their program offers because their schools do not have the resources or partnerships necessary, or because the students themselves are still unequipped with devices or reliable internet.

ELL students find remote learning especially difficult, particularly if they live in multi-generational households and have no choice but to attend virtual classes in common spaces. These circumstances result in students often feeling unable to turn on their mics and engage with class, and therefore miss vital opportunities to acquire spoken language acquisition skills. For example, one high school sophomore is experiencing a great deal of academic stress, as she lives with her family of four in a tight space without privacy. Her parents are not consistently working due to COVID-related schedule changes, and she finds it difficult to concentrate due to the noise in her home. This student was previously struggling with academics, and remote learning has compounded the difficulty - she feels she does not understand most of the material and is too far behind, she does not want to turn on the mic due to the noise and is consequently unable to talk to her teachers, and overall, she feels ashamed to ask for help.

Another typical situation illustrating the challenge is of an ELL high school sophomore who lives with her mother and older sister, and was left to navigate government websites on immigration and benefits resources and updates for her family after travel restrictions led to her sister getting stuck in China from before the pandemic to late October. Her sister's return meant that it fell on this student to contact the DOE to find a school for her older sister as well as tutor her sister on academics because she is struggling with the language barrier and remote learning. Her mother recently fell sick as well, and this student is responsible for gathering information about the vaccine and ensuring that her mother is able to receive it. This student is juggling these extremely challenging circumstances, often during class time, while also learning remotely and completing her schoolwork as the marking period nears its end. Clearly, COVID has had and continues to have a significant harmful impact on this student's learning, as well as her sister's.

Simply reopening the schools in the fall will not solve the problems these students have been experiencing. Although remote learning has posed a challenge for ELLs in particular, even when they do return to school in-person, they will need additional, targeted support to reacclimate to

their classrooms and feel comfortable with material. The budget must take these students' needs into account directly, particularly when so many of our students come from immigrant families.

2. **CACF's 15% and Growing Campaign - Recovery and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers Citywide Initiative**

New York City's adopted budget must include critical and intentional support for Asian American communities, which are consistently overlooked in the distribution of resources due to the model minority myth. In fact, Asian-led and serving organizations received only 4.65% of City Council discretionary dollars and less than 1.5% of social service contract dollars in FY2021, even though Asian Pacific Americans comprise over 15% of the population.

For this reason, CACF 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.** 15% and Growing campaign members employ thousands of New Yorkers and serve hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. Among a wide range of essential services, many of CACF's member organizations support young people 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 sustain the language-accessible and culturally responsive services they provide our youth and our families. CACF itself is looking to utilize funding to strengthen and expand our work with Asian American youth through the Asian American Student Advocacy Project (ASAP), as well as with parents and community organizations across NYC around building racial literacy and equipping people with skills and knowledge to build collaborations and be leaders in their communities.

Although we have fought for equitable funding for our community based organizations (CBOs) for years, we recognize that the available funding streams overwhelmingly remain inaccessible to most of our groups. As existing initiatives have expanded, increases in funding have commonly been allocated to groups that are larger and already recognized, rather than to new or smaller organizations. It is our intention to make sure that a more diverse and varied group of organizations receives funding, so that our community members can reliably seek support where they feel most comfortable. Despite the fact that the direct services our smaller CBOs provide tend to be lifelines for New Yorkers in need, they still remain underfunded.

**As a result, we are calling on City Council to create a new $4 million Citywide Initiative to support culturally competent, linguistically appropriate direct service programs by Asian American-led and -serving community-based organizations, called Recovery and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers.** This new initiative aims to provide direct, inclusive, and equitable funding to 50 community based organizations who serve the diverse needs of Asian American communities, including the East, Southeast, South, and Central Asian American diasporic

populations of New York City. The traumas of the pandemic have disproportionately hit Asian American communities, who have suffered higher rates of positivity and joblessness, as well as contended with a massive increase in reporting of anti-Asian violence and racism. This new initiative will ensure that our CBOs can efficiently apply for funding in an accessible manner and avoid pigeonholing their needs or services, to alleviate the pressures they have faced throughout the pandemic - with skyrocketing demand for their services but minimal funding for sustainment. The initiative is also distinct and unique in its intention to be inclusive of the expansive and diverse Asian American diaspora that exists within New York City. We are grateful that the State legislature has already recognized the need to support Asian American CBOs, with an investment of $10 million in this year's budget - but we know this is only the floor regarding the necessary funding to meet our communities' exacerbated needs, not the ceiling.

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.

# New York City Education Budget Demands

*We need equity in this city's education budget.*

*In order to have true education and racial justice in our New York City public schools and for our New York City public school students, we demand that New York City spends the influx of money to our public schools in a truly equitable manner. Over a dozen community organizations and hundreds of parents informed the list of demands listed below. We demand these be prioritized in the New York City budget.*

*The pandemic only highlighted the devastating reality of unequal and inequitable public school conditions. New York City has a critical opportunity to address these disparities and must take action with a budget that addresses these gaps and the needs of our students and families.*

> *Mayor de Blasio and the New York City Council have a responsibility to New York City public school students to ensure that they will spend the billions of dollars New York City is getting in ways that are centered in equity and are research based, and uphold our student's rights. In addition, while the city is*

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*slated to receive billions of dollars to fund one-time initiatives within the next three years, it is critical for the Mayor and Council to determine how they plan to sustain investments into educational programs when federal funding runs out.*

# Infrastructure & Technologically-Savvy Schools

$445 million

**Class size reduction: $250 million**

We support the City Council's proposal in its preliminary budget response that $250 million be invested in reducing class size next year, targeted first for struggling schools with especially vulnerable students. This would allow for the hiring of about 2500 new teachers, which could lower class sizes in as many as 10,000 classrooms, as every new teacher lowers the class size of every class in the same grade or subject in a particular school.

**Infrastructure: $175 million**

— $125 million to finance $3.6 billion in bonds to add 26,550 seats to the capital plan

— $25 million to lease and if necessary, renovate 17 parochial school buildings

— $25 million to finance bonds to generate $700 million for ventilation and other upgrades

**Grade/Developmentally Appropriate Devices: $20 million**

We urge the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) to supply keyboards, stylus, chargers, and student support applications for existing iPads. We encourage the purchase of Chromebooks or laptops going forward for all students enrolled in middle or high school. The DOE should also provide tech support in a more localized way instead of how it has been handled centrally. We recommend dispatching tech specialists to the Borough Support Offices to facilitate district- specific support for tech liaisons in the schools, to enable speedier service to lessen the time a student is without a workable device. We also recommend these specialists be bilingual or multilingual to support language access for those families experiencing difficulty setting up the learning devices because instructions are in English.

**Universal Broadband**

We urge the City of New York to prioritize installation of high-speed broadband infrastructure in public housing; in neighborhoods whose median wealth is below the citywide median wealth; and in low-income communities spatially situated amid higher income communities. We also urge the DOE to renegotiate free internet subscriptions with internet & cellular service providers for the entirety of the school year 2021-2022, including the summer of 2021, regardless of the possibility of full school reopening in Fall 2021.

# Supportive Schools

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$559 million

**Community Schools: $72 million**

Beginning in September 2021 New York City Community Schools will be expanding from 266 to 406 schools. We demand that $72 million is baselined for these additional 140 schools (a fully funded full service community school totals $450K per school).

a) Phase 1: This September, 32 new community schools (some of which are located on campuses) in the 27 communities hardest hit by COVID require an additional $2.195 million to achieve full funding.

b) Phase 2: Funding must be in place as the remaining 108 schools that will be added by 2025.

**Fully Fund Meaningful Citywide Restorative Justice: $225 million**

— Hire school-based Restorative Justice Coordinators in every middle and high school

— Provide ongoing restorative justice training for all school staff

— Require that restorative justice trainings integrate an anti-racist approach

— Develop restorative justice curriculum with teachers and students,

— Enable school-led pass through funding to community partners to support implementation and learning,

— Recognizing that it will take time to scale up to full implementation in all schools, the City should provide $118.5 million for implementation in 500 high schools this year.

**Expand Access to Social & Emotional Supports: $177 million**

— Invest $162 million in FY22 to hire new social workers and school counselors to continue working towards a ratio of 1:150 for all schools and 1:50 for high needs schools over the next 5 years, and prioritize hiring from Black and Brown communities.

— Invest $15 million in the Mental Health Continuum to provide direct mental health support for students with significant mental health needs who require an integrated system of targeted, intensive support and services.

— Allocate additional funding for schools to hire community members into supportive positions based on their needs.

— Hire diverse support staff: Increased recruitment for Black, non-white Latinx, and Asian Social workers, counselors and nurses that are multilingual to assess and evaluate young children with disabilities.

**Eliminate School Policing**

— Disband the School Safety Division

— Eliminate the Youth Coordination Officer position

— Fully divest from metal-detection equipment, and camera-surveillance technology

**Help Students Reconnect**

Invest $55 million to hire 500 community coordinators, including 150 shelter-based community coordinators, to engage in intensive strengths-based outreach to ensure that students who are disconnected from school can reengage in school and access support offered outside of school such as summer programming or after-school tutoring.

**Librarians/Library Media Specialists**

The New York State Education Department ordered the DOE to produce a plan in 2014 toward honoring

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students' right to library media specialists in all New York City public middle schools and high schools. Accounting for salaries, rising costs, and the current number of vacancies, we estimate it would cost $30 million to bring all of our schools into compliance with state mandates. (Current estimate extrapolated from costs estimated originally by the Department of Education during a New York City Council Committee on Education hearing (see pages 73-74).

**District 79 proposal for a state-of-the-art lab in the South Bronx:** The cost to upgrade the library into a lab approximately $750,000.

## Schools with Strong Academic Support $300 million

**"High-dosage" small group tutoring in a range of subjects: $100 million**

— Recommended in the City Council's response to the preliminary budget. Such programming must include specialized support for students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and students in the juvenile and criminal justice systems and must include bus service or other door-to-door transportation for students who need it to access any tutoring offered outside the regular school day.

## Culturally Responsive Schools $1 billion

**Launch intensive 3-year push to develop CRSE skills and expertise: $350 million**

— Hold summer institutes for the summers of 2021, 2022 and 2023, possibly through a partnership with EduColor, NYU Metro Center or other institutions

— Provide ongoing school-year professional development — Build new teacher capacity

Revamp literacy instruction and provide students with the individualized academic support they need:

**Evidence-based, culturally responsive reading curricula for core instruction: $50 million**

— Recommended in the City Council's response to the preliminary budget, so students can receive instruction in foundational literacy skills proven to work to teach students to read.

**Targeted one-on-one or small-group intervention: $150 million**

—To be provided to students who need more help learning to read.

**Expand CRSE and Ethnic Studies curricula and book: $600 million**

— Create new culturally responsive-sustaining curriculum

— Create website through DOE or CREHub.org to host culturally responsive lessons, activities, units etc. and make them publicly accessible to educators

— Fund schools to buy diverse and culturally responsive books for school and classroom libraries

**Create Office of Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education within the Chancellor's Office: $50 million**

— Led by the Senior Advisor for CRSE, who reports directly to the Chancellor

— In charge of overseeing and guiding CRSE plan

— Works with DOE's research & evaluation arm to monitor and evaluate plan

— Stays in close communication and collaboration with families, youth and community members as an essential asset in building curriculum

## Healthy and Safe

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# Schools $705 million

— Nurses: Every school should have a permanent, full time registered nurse. Currently the Office of School Health has a policy of hiring contract nurses, which don't have access to the Automated Student Health record, which is critical in emergency situations. Currently there are over 400 vacancies in the Office of School Health. Estimated cost to hire for existing vacancies would cost $200 million

— Health training around Asthma- the most prevalent healthcare related disability in children

— COVID Testing/Vaccine delivery: $500 million for testing, tracing and vaccine delivery in schools. (does not included "Situation Room salary")

— Early screening for dyslexia: There are 960 Psychologists in the DOE. Training them all to be able to conduct early screenings for students would cost roughly $5M

# Schools that Provide Specialized Support

$1,000,000,178

**Students with Disabilities: $321 million**

$85 million in FY 22 to address the preschool special education class shortage and provide salary parity to teachers of preschool special education classes at CBOs, as recommended in the City Council's response to the preliminary budget. While we support the $22 million investment in the Executive Budget to provide more inclusive preschool options in FY 22, there is no new funding to support preschoolers with the most significant disabilities until FY 23 and no commitment to salary parity for preschool special education teachers even in FY 23.

— Sufficient funding for compensatory services so students with disabilities can get the make-up instruction and services to which they are entitled as a result of the pandemic. In order for us to assess the $236 million investment in the Executive Budget for compensatory and other special education services in FY 22, the DOE must release a public plan explaining how students will receive their compensatory services.

— We demand more NEST and Horizon programs in Black and non-white Latinx and other non- white immigrant neighborhoods

— Create a free evaluation path to increase participation of BIPOC children in NEST and

**Data Disaggregation: $500,000**

For proper data collection and disaggregation of students' ethnic groups to identify and address inequities across ethnic groups.

— Changing internal data collection processes

— Stakeholder engagement on how best to collect data

— Collecting data at multiple application points, to ensure that we capture the broadest number of students who may enter DOE at different times and avoid waiting years for better data (which may be the consequence of restricting data collection to when students enroll in 3K, pre-K, or kindergarten)

— Internal rollout and training for staff on new data collection policies and procedures

— Public service announcement series and community engagement explaining changes in data being requested and why it will benefit families

— Providing physical forms when necessary with new demographic data questions

CACF
Coalition For Asian American Children+Families

Horizon programs that reflect their percentages in the New York City public schools

— Conduct outreach in communities around providing universal screenings of children for Early Intervention

and Preschool Special Education Therapeutic Services

using a culturally responsive approach

**Students in Foster Care: $7.5 million**

— $1.5 million for a small DOE office focused on students in foster care. Currently, the DOE does not have an office, team, or even a single staff member solely dedicated to supporting youth in care

— $5 million to guarantee bus service or other door-to door transportation for students in foster care so they can maintain school stability following the disruption of the pandemic.

**English Language Learners and immigrant families: $350 million (Full 3 year budget here)**

1) Urgently develop and implement a plan for catching up ELLs and students with Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents.

— Develop and offer robust, targeted academic support for ELLs and students from LEP families in schools, including ELLs with disabilities.

— Create and offer ELL summer school and extended day programs for students in K - 12th grade that fully incorporates early childhood students (K-2nd grade) and ELLs with disabilities.

— Identify and publicly announce the scope of investment and metrics of success for this effort. And clearly specify how the DOE and which leaders will own monitoring the impact of a targeted academic support plan for these students and families.

2) Invest $20 million dollars for at least three years ($60 million total) for grants to community-based organizations (CBOs) and schools already well-positioned to support ELLs and immigrant families. The following programs should be prioritized:

— Afterschool for ELLs, ELLs with disabilities, and students with LEP families.

— Saturday programs for ELLs, ELLs with disabilities, and students with LEP families.

— Family engagement and community education programs for LEP families.

— In-person support for ELLs, ELLs with disabilities, and LEP families, where feasible.

3) Implement and fully fund the New York Immigration Coalition's Education Collaborative's Communications Plan. Transform DOE communications infrastructure by:

— Avoiding sole reliance on online and email communication.

— Focusing significant resources on forms of communication that are more accessible and easier to understand for LEP families, such as phone calls, letters on paper, videos, and face-to-face interactions, etc.

— Adapting strategies to be inclusive of families who speak Languages of Limited Diffusion and those with low literacy and/or low digital literacy.

— Centrally tracking and monitoring school-based engagement of immigrant families.

**New York City Council**
**Committee on Finance**
**Executive Budget Hearing FY 2022**
**Tuesday, May 25th, 2021**

Good afternoon, my name is Lakshmi Sanmuganathan, and I am a Policy Fellow at the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF). CACF greatly appreciates Chairman Dromm and the esteemed members of the Committee on Finance for holding this important hearing and providing us the opportunity to submit testimony.

Since 1986, CACF has been the nation's only pan-Asian children and families' advocacy organization, leading the fight for improved and equitable policies, systems, funding, and services to support APA New Yorkers. **CACF also leads the 15% and Growing Campaign, which unites over 50 Asian-led and serving organizations across New York City to fight for a fair and equitable budget that protects the needs of our most vulnerable community members.**

Over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a time of immense fear and uncertainty for Asian Pacific American (APA) New Yorkers.

- Asian Americans have been 2x more likely to test positive for COVID-19 than their white counterparts, yet less likely to be tested at all.
- Asian Americans have experienced the largest increase in joblessness of all major racial groups in NYC, with unemployment claims rising 6,900% in the first few months of the pandemic last year, and a slower recovery since then.
- Nearly 50% of all APAs in NYC live in the hardest hit areas during the pandemic
- There have been over 3,800 incidents of anti-Asian violence and an 1,900% increase in Anti-Asian related hate crimes across NYC

Recent data also reveals that APA communities have been hit disproportionately harder by the pandemic as a result of systemic inequalities in our healthcare and economics system that long predate COVID-19. These issues vary across communities and have relied heavily upon Asian-led and serving organizations to fill in the gaps of services through culturally inclusive and language accessible services that have the most impact on addressing the needs of our communities.

Yet our community based organizations remain historically underfunded and have yet to receive adequate support to sustain their vital services. **In FY 2021, APA organizations received only 4.65% of City Council discretionary dollars and less than 1.5% of social service contract dollars.** Current levels of public funding for the APA community also remain disproportionate to our community's expansive needs and growing population, which now exceeds over 15% of New York City.

As we witness the severe rise in anti-Asian violence that results from racist and dangerous rhetoric surrounding the virus, our families, youth, and communities need a focused effort from New York City to help us heal and recover from the many traumas we face. The Asian American communities' collective trauma has built up for more than a year as our community has been used as a scapegoat for a global pandemic and the fallout from an ill-prepared government. What we are seeing today is rooted in a history of racism in this country, and the

real threat of white supremacy and white nationalism. And violence against our Asian American communities is not new - from South, to Southeast, to East Asian Americans - our communities have experienced violence and racism for many decades.

*Providing equitable funding to support Asian American New Yorkers is more necessary than ever in the healing, recovery, and revitalization of our communities -- to help move NYC towards true racial equity.*

**We are calling on New York City Council to create '*Recovery and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers'* – a new $4 million Citywide Initiative** to support culturally competent, linguistically appropriate direct service programming by Asian American-led and -serving community-based organizations. This new initiative would provide direct, sustainable, inclusive, and equitable funding to 50 community based organizations who serve the diverse diasporic Asian Pacific American populations of New York City, including East, Southeast, South, and Central/West Asian American communities. **All of these Asian American community organizations have collaborated and come together to support this initiative - it comes from within our community.**

Through your support, leadership, and solidarity, we aim to uplift these 50 Asian Pacific American community based organizations, who are providing direct and life-affirming services to Asian Pacific American New York Yorkers to address the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes and disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic; while laying the groundwork for long term recovery and healing within our communities.

**The 15% and Growing Campaign is also calling on NYC Council to expand funding to three Citywide Initiatives:**

- **Emergency Food/Food Pantries**
- **Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations**
- **Digital Inclusion and Literacy Initiative**

These citywide initiatives have previously not been funded adequately enough to reach our communities *or* the organizations who serve them. And expansions to these initiatives will help bring more of our APA organizations into the fold who are currently providing language accessible and culturally inclusive services to address the issues of food insecurity, mental health, and digital literacy that are growing within our communities amid the pandemic; yet going unaddressed and underfunded.

We thank you for this opportunity to testify, and look forward to working with City Council to ensure that APA New Yorkers have access to the services and supports they need to survive and thrive in these troubling times.

**The 15% & Growing Campaign is supported by over 50 Asian-led and -serving organizations in New York City that aim for the State and City governments to adopt fair and equitable budgets that protect the most vulnerable Asian Pacific American New Yorkers. Campaign members employ thousands of New Yorkers and serve hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers.**

Academy of Medical & Public Health Services ▪ Adhikaar ▪ Alliance of South Asian American Labor ▪ Andolan - Organizing South Asian Workers ▪ Apex for Youth* ▪ APICHA Community Health Center* ▪ Arab American Family Support Center ▪ Asian American Arts Alliance ▪ Asian American / Asian Research Institute - CUNY ▪ Asian American Federation ▪ Asian Outreach Clinic, The Child Center of New York▪ Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund ▪ Asian Americans for Equality ▪Center for the Integration and Advancement of New Americans ▪ Chhaya CDC* ▪ CMP* ▪ Chinese-American Planning Council* ▪ Chinese Progressive Association ▪ Coalition for Asian American Children & Families (lead) ▪ Council of Peoples Organization ▪ Damayan Migrant Workers Association ▪ DRUM – South Asian Organizing Center ▪ Filipino American Human Services, Inc. ▪ Greater Chinatown Community Association ▪ Hamilton Madison House ▪ Homecrest Community Services ▪ Indo-Caribbean Alliance ▪ Indochina Sino-American Community Center ▪ Immigrant Health and Cancer Disparities, MSKCC ▪ Immigrant Social Services* ▪ Japanese American Association of New York* ▪ Japanese American Social Services Inc. ▪ Korean American Family Service Center* ▪ Korean American League for Civic Action ▪ Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc*. ▪ Korean Family Counseling and Research Center ▪ Leviathan Lab ▪Lower East Side Family Union ▪ MAAWS for Global Welfare, Inc. ▪ Mekong NYC* ▪ MinKwon Center for Community Action* ▪ New York Coalition for Asian American Mental Health ▪ NYU Center for the Study of Asian American Health ▪

SAKHI for South Asian Women ▪ Sapna NYC* ▪ Sikh Coalition ▪ South Asian Council for Social Services* ▪ South Asian Youth Action* ▪ Turning Point for Women and Families ▪ United Chinese Association of Brooklyn ▪ United Sikhs ▪ Womankind* ▪ Women for Afghan Women* ▪ YWCA of Queens* (*Steering Committee)

**Cafeteria Redesign May 2021**

Testimony of Lunch 4 Learning Parent Caucus Bronx Representatives

Members of various Educational Councils & Committees.

The New York City Council Committee on Education Budget Hearing
Tuesday, May 25th, 2021

We are parents, caregivers, grandparents, community members of children in New York City Public Schools.

Cafeteria Redesign is the single biggest transformative initiative to build upon the foundation of Universal Free School Lunch(UFL)Programs in all NYC Public Schools. Removal of the current seating style arrangement and the institutionalized look of school cafeterias (example prisons). Transforming the cafeteria environment into a deli-style service that is visually stimulating, safe and inviting, the seating area accommodates more of a welcoming, comfortable atmosphere that promotes socialization and helps eliminate stigmas attached to eating school food. In light of this pandemic, having our students returning to a positive school environment can definitely improve their experience with a "Cafeteria Enhancement" as opposed to reinforcing the traumatic and depressing experience of this time.

Universal (Free) Meals and it's positive impact on participants have been linked to increases in test scores and academic improvements. We see a 35% increase in lunch participation among the first set of high schools that have had the redesign. There also have been several studies recently that show students who participated in school meal programs received food of a higher nutritional value then those who did not participate. And improvement to school meal standards have contributed to reduction in childhood obesity. More variety on a daily basis, with over 4x more fruits and vegetables served than in a traditional cafeteria.

The highly cost effective transformation per school is $500,000 and the construction is done over a weekend. Thus far, the Office of Food and Nutritional Services (OFNS)NYCDOE has redesigned 34 middle and high school cafeterias across the city.

We are asking the City Council to support and approve funding for an additional $150 Million in the capital budget to scale the model up to (½ High schools and ½ Middle schools) redesign 300 more cafeterias over the next (5) five years.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the 1.1 million students we serve regarding the need for cafeteria redesign within our NYC public schools.

Respectfully submitted,

The Lunch 4 Learning (L4L)Parent Caucus Bronx Members

Constance Asiedu, Marie D. Plaisir, Emma Allotta, Margarita Martinez, Catherine Baez, Josephine Ofili, Pamela Stewart, Rosemary Ofili

# CENTRAL AMERICAN LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Ayuda Legal Para Refugiados Centroamericanos

240 Hooper Street Brooklyn New York 11211 (718) 486-6800 Fax (718) 486-5287

Testimony to City Council Finance Committee

May 25, 2021

**Central American Legal Assistance** (CALA) has represented Central & South American asylum seekers and others for over 35 years. We have lifted the threat of deportation off thousands of shoulders and gained legal status for countless hard working New York immigrants.

City Council financial support has been critical to our success. Last fiscal year we received $380,000 for our share of the city-wide Unaccompanied Minors & Families Initiative [1](funded last fiscal year at $3,606.800); $84,000 from the Immigrant Opportunity Initiative and a $5,500 grant from our Councilmember Steve Levin.

The City Council needs to maintain at least this level of support if we are to continue to represent our huge caseload. With the lessening of COVID restrictions, hundreds of cases are coming out of the immigration court's backlog and are now being scheduled for final decision. Our clients – the never-stopped-working-class of Latinos/as – suffered gravely during COVID. Some died.

We now must pick up those cases already in the pipeline when COVID shut us down as well as prepare for a new influx from the border as the Biden Administration slowly processes in new arrivals ( mostly all unaccompanied children or single parent/child units.) Conditions in our neighboring Central American countries have remained grave and the need for a safe haven in the United States remains. Many of our clients fled only after a close family member – often the breadwinner – was killed.

(continues)

[1] Members of the UMI Coalition are, in addition to CALA, Catholic Charities, The Door, Safe Passage, Legal Aid, KIND, Human Rights First and the Young Center. There is both synergy and efficiency in our work where some members focus almost exclusively on minors while others, like CALA, focus on asylum & removal defense for families. We share resources, best practices and consult regularly on difficult issues.

Despite COVID, CALA has been able to assist over 300 City Council supported persons this past fiscal year, many only over the phone or by Zoom. Queens had the most followed closely by Brooklyn and the Bronx.

In conclusion, we ask

- **The City Council continue and even increase funding to the UMI (or ICARE) coalition for children and parent/child protection seeking immigrants.**
- **Continue and if possible increase CALA's IOI grant of $84,000 for all asylum seekers not covered by the UMI program.**

Thank you for your fidelity to our city's immigrants.

Sincerely yours,

Anne Pilsbury

Anne Pilsbury, Esq.

Director

# LEGAL SERVICES FOR THE WORKING POOR

City Fiscal Year 2022

City Council Executive Budget Hearing

May 25, 2021

**Introduction**

Thank you Chair Dromm and the Committee on Finance for the long-standing support of the Legal Services for the Working Poor Coalition. CAMBA Legal Services is one of the five members of the Legal Services for the Working Poor (LSWP) Coalition that includes Housing Conservation Coordinators, Mobilization for Justice, NMIC, and TakeRoot Justice. The Coalition was created 17 years ago with support from the City Council to address the civil legal needs of working poor and other low-income New Yorkers whose income is slightly higher than the poorest New Yorkers. While their income is very low, it renders them ineligible for free civil legal services and these families are often just one missed paycheck away from facing eviction or other dire consequences. LSWP's services are critical to allowing working New Yorkers to maintain financial independence and preserving economic stability in communities across New York City. In Fiscal Year 2020, the LSWP initiative was funded at $3,205,000 from the City Council, with each of the five Coalition members receiving $455,000. In Fiscal Year 2021, these funds were reduced due to the COVID19 fiscal crisis by approximately 15% with each Coalition provider

receiving $384,700. **This year, the Legal Services for the Working Poor Coalition is respectfully requesting a restoration of City Council funding at the Fiscal Year 2020 level**.

**Services and Population We Serve**

Working poor New Yorkers who often barely make ends meet can face catastrophic consequences as a result of a civil legal problem, such as not being paid for their work or not being paid overtime; identity theft; the freezing of a bank account as a result of a collection lawsuit they did not even know about; or being denied public benefits to which they are entitled. The consequence of these problems can lead to other problems, including increased risk of eviction or foreclosure. These working New Yorkers can end up spiraling downward to join the ranks of the poor if they do not have access to lawyers to assist them. Our legal services organizations represent these New Yorkers in all five boroughs in housing, consumer, foreclosure, immigration, benefits, and employment matters in state, appellate, and federal courts, and various administrative agencies.

**Consequences of COVID-19 on the Working Poor**

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis working poor New Yorkers have and will continue to disproportionately face legal problems in unprecedented numbers. Even before the COVID-19 crisis, tens of thousands of New Yorkers were hanging on by a thread to their homes, their families, their well-being, and their dignity. As the crisis has laid bare, neighborhoods of color and immigrant communities across the City have been especially hit hard by health and economic disparities. The crisis has resulted in unprecedented problems related to unemployment insurance, as well as workplace safety concerns, issues with CARES Act stimulus payments, price gouging, and scams, and has caused many New Yorkers to incur unexpected debt, which will mean an

increase in debt collection litigation, and for some, bankruptcy. Those working poor who are adversely affected will need members of our Coalition to advise them, help them navigate various complex legal processes, fight their legal battles by representing them in the cases against them, and advocate for them in the multiple systems that impact them. But for our legal services, the working poor community would be detrimentally impacted, and the cascading effect of not being able to support working poor families at this time will quickly lead to greater homelessness, poorer health outcomes, job loss and overall instability.

**Conclusion**

This Council's funding for Legal Services for the Working Poor is the only funding that specifically targets the civil legal needs of working people to ensure continued self-sufficiency for families struggling to survive in New York City. If we are not able to meet the legal service needs of the many people who seek our help, particularly those affected by the COVID-19 crisis, the human consequences will be dire: immigrant families will leave their homes because their landlords threaten to report them to ICE; children whose families have been wrongly denied unemployment benefits, public assistance, or SNAP/food stamps will go hungry; families whose homes could be saved through aggressive foreclosure or eviction defense will become homeless; people with disabilities will be denied the disability benefits they need to live with dignity; and workers who have been cheated of wages by unscrupulous employers will go unpaid.

For the above reasons, it is vitally important that the City Council continue to support this flexible funding stream that allows legal service organizations to provide a diverse array of civil legal services to working poor New Yorkers. We urge the Council to restore funding for civil legal service initiatives overall and for the Legal Services for the Working Poor allocation in particular. We ask that the City Council restore the funding for the Legal Services for the Working Poor

initiative at $3,205,000 in FY 22 (FY 20 levels). The positive benefits of civil legal services funding for the city's budget and its economy make it the right choice for economic, social, and humanitarian reasons.

**Testimony**
**New York City Council**
**Committee on Finance**
**Executive Budget Hearing**
**Tuesday, May 25, 2021**

Submitted by Beatriz Diaz Taveras
Executive Director
Catholic Charities Community Services

Good afternoon to Chairman Dromm and the members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance. I am Beatriz Diaz Taveras, Executive Director of Catholic Charities Community Services. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the accomplishments and challenges presented by the FY22 Executive Budget and its potential to help mitigate the long-lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our economy, our clients and our City.

For over 70 years, Catholic Charities Community Services, Archdiocese of New York (CCCS) has provided comprehensive, professional human services to vulnerable, low-income City residents in the poorest communities of Manhattan, the Bronx, and Staten Island. Its network of services enables a participant in any of our programs to access a continuum of services which include: case management services to help people resolve financial, emotional and family issues; long-term disaster case management services; eviction and homelessness prevention; emergency food; immigration legal services; refugee resettlement; ESOL services; specialized assistance for the blind; after-school programs at summer camps and community centers; and supportive housing programs for adults with severe and persistent mental illness. Through its programs, CCCS serves thousands of individuals each year without regard to race, ethnicity, gender or religion.

<u>COVID-19 Response</u>:

The impact of COVID-19 on the communities we serve, particularly immigrants and communities of color, has been and will be harsh, disproportionate, and lasting. Even before the pandemic, clients reported high levels of anxiety, distress, uncertainty, instability in family life, economic insecurity, lack of income, and food insecurity. This combination effectively acted as a pre-existing condition, intensifying the health, social, economic, and financial challenges that with each day became increasingly dire.

Like many human services nonprofits and City agencies, Catholic Charities Community Services was forced to adapt its programs to expand and maintain service delivery while safeguarding the public health. Many traditionally in-person services, from case management and eviction prevention, to immigration legal services and day laborer outreach, to Learning to Work and the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), were migrated to hybrid and virtual models that necessitated investments in technology and training for both employees

and clients. Responding to the persistent rise of food insecurity and loss of income, particularly for our immigrant neighbors, CCCS proudly partnered with the City and nonprofit partners to distribute over 8.4 million meals and thousands of financial assistance cards to families and individuals in need.

CCCS was able to adapt to emerging challenges due to, but at times in spite of, its partnership with government. Contract registration, amendment and payment delinquencies generated financial stress in the face of rising costs, while delayed guidance forced providers to expend funds without guarantee of reimbursement. State withholdings and cuts to indirect cost rates and discretionary initiatives strained program resources at the precise time they were needed most, while the consequences of chronically underfunded contracts had left little room to absorb the reductions. While we are thankful for restorations made in the FY21 Adopted Budget, such as the Summer Youth Employment Program, the consternation caused by the original contract terminations unnecessarily eroded trust between the City and the nonprofit community.

FY22 Executive Budget: Successes and Further Opportunities

As more City residents are vaccinated and public health restrictions continue to recede, the FY22 Budget is an opportunity for the Council and the Administration to solidify the values that will characterize and enable the City's sustainable and equitable recovery. One encouraging sign of these values is the restoration and baseline funding of the Indirect Cost Rate Initiative at an annual rate of $94 million. We thank the Council for championing this issue and the Mayor for including it in the Executive Budget, and look forward to its inclusion in the Adopted Budget. As a member of the Nonprofit Resiliency Committee that worked with the City to develop the Indirect Cost Manual, this commitment is a significant milestone and a welcome reversal of the projected retroactive cuts promised a few months ago.

While this investment represents significant progress, more remains to be done to combat the systemic underfunding of human services contracts and the web of excessive regulations that promote uncompetitive wages and hamper innovation. A restoration of the annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for human services contracts would represent an additional positive sign of the City's commitment to the well-being of human services workers and the clients they serve.

In addition to these sector-wide initiatives, CCCS is thankful for the Council's support of support of programs that support the physical, social and mental health of its most vulnerable residents. CCCS is encouraged by the full funding of SYEP, the restoration of SONYC programs, and the announcement of the Summer Rising program. Investments made in the expansion of Community Schools, as well as the restoration of needed funding for Learning to Work, are equally positive developments. We look forward to the swift implementation of these initiatives that will help meet the academic, professional and recreational needs of the City's children and adolescents.

As the Council works with the Administration to finalize the Adopted Budget, there are several actions it may take to ensure that current programs can continue to provide reliable services essential to New York's recovery. CCCS is thankful for the Council's investments in discretionary initiatives and contracts that have enabled it to meet a diversity of needs. Discretionary contracts have supported, inter alia, the Unaccompanied Minor Children and Families program, the Bronx Day Laborer Center and the Alianza Cultural Center, as well as emerging capital needs. Baselining these resources will help to ensure a continuity of services through the coming period of electoral transition. Similarly, the shifting economic landscape will continue to create new opportunities that demand new skills. Funding should be allocated to mount a strong workforce development program that will help New Yorkers take charge and thrive in these emerging occupations.

In particular, we ask for the Council's continued support of the Immigrant Children Advocates Relief Effort (ICARE), a coalition of non-profit legal service providers providing free lawyers to unaccompanied immigrant youth and immigrant families facing deportation proceedings without representation. Since 2014, Catholic Charities and its collaborating agencies have represented over 2000 individuals seeking protection through asylum and other humanitarian immigration benefits, leading to over 750 immigrants avoiding deportation. ICARE funding additionally supports Terra Firma, a medical-legal partnership with Montefiore Hospital that provides co-located, wraparound legal, medical, and mental health services, empowering immigrant children to develop resilience, attain stability, and reach their full potential. With record numbers of newly arrived unaccompanied children in 2021 and vaccination programs that are expanding to youth populations, ICARE's immigration and healthcare services are more important than ever.

One note of caution: the arrival of federal stimulus funding that has enabled a robust recovery budget represents a significant risk toward the end of the Financial Plan. Many of the restorations and new initiatives in the Executive Budget rely on resources that will run out after 2024, presenting a complex challenge that threatens the City's ability to follow through on the obligations it creates. We ask that the Council and the Administration carefully consider how the City may utilize the gains realized through the coming economic recovery to secure the continuation of its vision after federal resources are expended.

Conclusion:

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before the Committee today on the accomplishments and challenges presented by the FY22 Executive Budget and its potential to help mitigate the long-lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our economy, our clients and our City. Catholic Charities is proud to partner with the City and other nonprofits to confront the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and looks forward to continuing these partnerships in helping to usher in a period of sustained and equitable recovery.

**Testimony Presented at the New York City Council Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget Hearing**
**Committee on Finance**

May 25, 2021

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Alice Bufkin and I am the Director of Policy for Child and Adolescent Health at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc. CCC is a 75-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce. We document the facts, engage and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for solutions.

I would like to thank Chair Dromm and all the members of the Finance Committee for holding this hearing on the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2022.

Children and families have experienced a year of hardship that will continue to impact families across generations. CCC's recent report, *Child & Family Well-Being in New York City: Ranking Risks and Understanding COVID-19 Impacts Across 59 Community Districts*, explores the profound harms the pandemic has done to communities in New York. The report underscores how existing disparities in health care access, housing and employment have only become more exaggerated during the pandemic. New Yorkers who are Black, Hispanic, or immigrants have endured the highest rates of COVID-19 related illness or death. Communities of color with high shares of residents working in essential services faced higher risk of exposure to the virus (e.g. health care and food retail) or industries with higher rates of job and wage loss (e.g., restaurants and hospitality). Meanwhile, more than 470,000 households in New York City lack broadband internet access. This not only limits the possibility of remote work for parents and remote learning for children, but also impedes access to basic health and safety information, as well as needed services, including safety net programs and vaccines.

Given all of these challenges, decisive action must be taken to address the cumulative and compounding consequences of the current crises on children and their families and the preexisting risk factors that have contributed to these sobering effects. Rising parental unemployment levels deepen child hunger, housing insecurity and homelessness; decreased engagement in well-child visits, immunization, and early intervention due to shelter-in-place requirements result in declining child health and development; and inequitable distance learning and learning loss widen the racial achievement gap. These threats to child well-being are also increasing at a time of social isolation and result in declining mental health and heightened risk of child welfare involvement.

There are critical steps the city must take to reverse harmful cuts in previous years, as well as invest in essential child and family services. Below are recommendations for investments needed to help New Yorkers recover and thrive.

## Addressing the Health and Behavioral Health Needs of Children

1. **Fully restore Fiscal Year 2021 cuts to City Council health and human service initiatives. These cuts have impaired the ability of community-based organizations to support communities through the COVID-19 pandemic.**

In the Fiscal Year 2021 Adopted Budget, City Council initiatives saw an average 15-20% reduction in funding. These cuts affected community-based organizations across a broad spectrum of services, ranging from maternal and child health, to reproductive and sexual health, to mental health services, to nutritional assistance, to services designed to connect New Yorkers to the healthcare safety net.

These cuts hit CBOs at a time when community needs were escalating in the face of the pandemic. Many of those providing services through these initiatives belonged to the very communities most impacted by COVID-19, multiplying the harmful effects of austerity during a time when investments in health were needed more than ever.

As New York begins to envision recovery, we urge the Administration and the City Council to recognize that recovery will not be possible without restoring and enhancing the wide spectrum of health and human service that help support struggling families, keep children healthy, and connect communities to care.

**We therefore urge that City Council health and human service initiatives at a minimum be restored to their funding levels in Fiscal Year 2020.**

2. **Restore and enhance funding for community-based behavioral health supports**

For years, programs in the City Council's Mental Health Initiatives have used non-traditional, community-based settings to help identify children and families in need and offer developmentally appropriate services and support. These trusted community services are more essential than ever in addressing the trauma children and families are experiencing in the face of COVID-19. Unfortunately, many of these programs saw cuts in the FY21 Adopted Budget. According to a survey by the Coalition for Behavioral Health, because of cuts to Mental Health Initiatives, 40% of providers report serving fewer people; 20% had to lay off staff, and 30% had to cut staff hours.

Given the heightened needs facing children and families now, we urge the City Council to restore and enhance funding for key programs:

1) **The Mental Health Services for Children under Five** Initiative (CU5) allows organizations to work with children to develop psychosocial and educational skills, as well as cope with trauma resulting from witnessing or experiencing domestic violence, sexual abuse, or physical or mental abuse. CU5 has provided screening and psychotherapy to thousands of families, as well as mental health consultation services to numerous pediatricians, preschool

teachers, and child welfare workers. **We urge city leaders to fund this program at $1.2 million.**

2) **Opioid Prevention and Treatment** Supports neighborhood-based prevention & treatment efforts around opioid abuse, including overdose reversal drugs. Overdose deaths increased 55% from 2015 to 2019. Early 2020 data shows the pandemic made this substantially worse: deaths rose an additional 28% in Q1 of 2020, compared to Q1 of 2019. **We urge city leaders to fund this program at $4,375,000**
3) **Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations** supports community-based behavioral health programs, including medication for individuals in transitional housing and mental health services for families with child welfare involvement. **We urge city leaders to fund this program at $3,477,000**
4) **Developmental, Psychological and Behavioral Health** helps individuals with behavioral health needs and developmental disabilities, supporting harm reduction, clubhouses and more. **We urge city leaders to fund this program at $2,255,493.**
5) **The Court-Involved Youth Initiative** helps identify youth involved in the justice system who require mental health services and provides family counseling and respite services to families of court-involved youth. **We urge city leaders to fund this program at $3,400,000.**
6) **LGBTQ Youth Mental Health** supports comprehensive mental health services for vulnerable LGBTQ youth, focusing particularly on youth of color, youth in immigrant families, homeless youth, and youth who are court-involved. **We urge city leaders to fund this program at $1,200,000.**
7) **Autism Awareness** supports wraparound services for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in after-school and summer programs and during school closings. **We urge city leaders to fund this program at $3,246,846.**

3. **Address the trauma and loss of the pandemic by enhancing school-based behavioral health supports for children.**

When children return to school, the preparedness of the education and community-based behavioral health system will play a critical role in identifying and providing mental health support and treatment to students. An integrated system of intensive supports and services will be particularly important for students who experienced significant mental health needs even before this crisis.

What is *not* needed are punitive responses to trauma that engage the police, emergency services, and school safety agents when reacting to students in emotional distress. Too often, schools respond to a child's need for emotional or behavioral support with suspension, expulsion, or a call to the NYPD or Emergency Medical Services. In fact, the NYPD reported intervening in more than 3,500 incidents involving students in emotional distress in the 2018-2019 school year, with a disproportionate number of the incidents involving Black and Latinx students.

Rather than continue investing in police engagement in schools, **we join other city partners in calling on the city not to hire 554 school police lost to attrition, and instead reinvest that $50 million in restorative justice, social emotional support, and other school-based supports.** Below are critical areas where additional investments are also needed:

- **Additional funding for direct social/emotional support services in schools.** The Mayor has proposed adding 500 new social workers to NYC schools. School social workers are a critically important part of the behavioral health landscape, and we are grateful for significant investments in this workforce. However, a single social worker is often insufficient to address the complex needs of a school's population. School social workers should be provided with the training and clinical supervision they need to be supported in their work. City leaders should also make investments in the full continuum of direct social/emotional supports for students, including school-based clinics, wraparound behavioral supports, behavior specialists, trauma-informed de-escalation staff, school psychologists, conflict resolution specialists, and school climate and restorative justice staff.

- **The city should take a thoughtful approach to integrating new social workers in schools to ensure community-based mental health providers also receive the support they need to continue serving students in their communities.** CBOs play a pivotal role in supporting community mental health needs but struggle to keep their doors open in the face of inadequate funding and workforce shortages. Rather than increasing the overall city capacity, significant hirings in schools can often lead CBOs to lose a large portion of their workforce. In order to increase the overall behavioral health capacity of the city, city leaders should strengthen the community-based workforce in parallel with strengthening the school-based workforce.

- **Invest $15 million in a Mental Health Support Continuum to support the significant behavioral health needs of students in designated neighborhoods in high-need schools.** CCC joins our city partners and the City Council in urging the administration to invest in targeted intensive mental health supports for students such as a Mental Health Support Continuum. This proposal is based on the Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline's 2016 Recommendations. These recommendations included strategies to address in-school environment and student behavior to promote a safe learning setting for everyone, one that ensures students who misbehave or make a mistake are provided the supports to stay engaged in school for their academic and social well-being.

  The Continuum would implement strategies including clinician response teams; student assessments to determine appropriate level of care needed; direct, ongoing mental health supports; school partnerships with hospital-based mental health clinics; school-based mental health clinicians; whole-school trainings in Collaborative Problem Solving; and call-in centers to advise school staff about students in crisis in two designated neighborhoods with high-need schools.

- **Invest at least $118.5 million to expand school-wide restorative justice practices to 500 schools.** Restorative practices help build healthy school communities, promoting inclusiveness, relationship-building, and problem-solving to help address student behavior and reduce harmful disciplinary practices. **Ultimately, this investment should be scaled up to $225 million to allow full implementation city-wide within 5 years. Expansion of whole-school restorative practices citywide.**

4. **Develop a comprehensive plan to ameliorate the secondary health impacts of COVID-19 on young children**.

National data shows a precipitous decline in preventive and primary care rates during the peak of the pandemic, including a 22 percent decline in vaccinations, a 44 percent decline in physical, cognitive, and developmental child screening services, and a 69 percent decline in dental services.[i]

While these rates are beginning to improve, much of the damage has been done, as many children have gone months without the preventive and primary care services that are so important for their development. Early Intervention stands as a stark example of this loss. A recent report from Advocates for Children found that during the 4-week period beginning March 22, there was an 82% decline in referrals from earlier in the year. From mid-April through mid-May, there was 67% decrease in evaluations, and the total number of infants and toddlers receiving EI services between July and September 2020 was 15% lower than the same time period in 2019—a difference of nearly 2,900 children.[ii]

These rates underscore the urgent need to make additional investments to identify which children have been left behind and develop a campaign to reconnect children and their families to essential preventive and primary services.

**We urge city leaders to commit additional investments in these efforts to enable both the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and community-based organizations to connect families to care**, **including strategies such as:**

- Enhancing funding for community health workers and health navigators.
- Enhancing funding, support, and coordination among public health departments, providers, and community-based organizations to help identify unvaccinated children and connect them to services. Promote streamlined vaccination strategies that have been effective in other states, including pre-visit virtual screenings, mobile vaccinations, drive-through clinics, and curbside immunization clinics, and clearly stated safety protocols to ensure parents feel safe when their children are vaccinated.
- Identifying and implementing strategies to improve children's access to oral health services, including by promoting mobile dental service models and ramping up school-based dental services once students are able to return safely to school.
- Enhancing funding for child find efforts to identify children who may have missed developmentally appropriate screenings. Additionally, the City should invest in efforts such as the United for Brownsville Early Intervention Ambassador program, designed to combat racial inequities in EI referral and evaluation rates.

## Combatting Hunger in the Face of COVID-19

Even prior to COVID-19, 1 in 5 children in NYC were experiencing food insecurity. COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on hunger in the city, leading to a 39% increase in food insecure children in 2020 compared to 2018.[iii] CCC echoes the priorities of Lunch 4 Learning and the New York COVID-19 Food Coalition in urging the City to take immediate steps to combat food

insecurity and support families struggling with hunger. We urge city leaders to take the following actions:

**1. Address emergency feeding and benefits access.**

- **$10M increase in baseline funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP).** As the City Council noted in their budget response, emergency food providers receiving EFAP funding should also be allowed to use program funds to cover their increased administrative, rental and operational costs that have emerged since the start of the pandemic. In addition, we ask that the RFP for EFAP be adjusted to allow more opportunity and incentive for the purchase of fresh food and that pantries have choice in what they buy as they do with the New York State Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP).

- **$20M to support emergency food programs operated by community based organizations.** We also support the City Council's call for an additional $20M in baseline funding to support smaller community based emergency food providers that are not a part of the EFAP network.

- **$37M increase to Human Resource Administration towards nutrition benefit program enrollment and outreach.** As City Council noted in their budget response, an additional $37M in funding for HRA is needed to improve client service, benefits access, and to address individuals that have been pushed off of safety net programs due to their receipt of pandemic relief support. We call on the Administration to allocate some of this funding towards re-opening field offices closed during the pandemic, adding additional One Stop Shop locations, expanding emergency food distribution efforts, adding additional staff to the hotline to enroll people in programs as well as additional money for promoting Health Bucks and Get the Good Stuff Program at DOHMH.

- **Increase Data Sharing and Transparency around GetFoodNYC.** The City Council's budget response calls for a new infusion of $80M for the Get Food NYC program in FY22. Yet, little to no information has been made available to advocates or City Council on the details and impacts of the Get Food program to date. Although we are supportive of additional funding for this program, we underscore the need for an oversight hearing with City Council's General Welfare staff in June 2021 as well as a reporting bill on the on the Administration's COVID-19 Emergency Food Programs to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the GetFood program before it is made a permanent fixture of NYC's emergency food response efforts.

- **Additional $32 Million Reinvestment in Emergency Food Relief in NYC.** Last spring, the City distributed $25 million to emergency food providers to help address the hunger crisis exacerbated by COVID. We support the Administration's request for an additional investment of $32 Million towards these efforts, including $27.7M for the P-FRED program as well as the inclusion of new baseline funding to add additional staff and capacity to the Mayor's Office of Food Policy. We call on the Administration to reinstate the delivery of fresh produce to emergency food providers through the P-FRED program

as quickly as possible. We also urge the City Council to include review and analysis of the P-FRED program at the planned General Welfare Oversight Committee hearing in June.

**2. Address hunger in schools.**

- **Invest $3.5 million for additional school food managers in The Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS).** OFNS has been working tirelessly to make sure that students have the food they so desperately need during COVID-19 school closures, and to ensure that these meals are high quality and culturally competent. In order to do so, an additional 60 school food managers should be employed to plan and review appealing menus, educate students on the importance of eating healthfully, train new personnel, and increase participation in the school meals program. Funding for these additional 60 managers would enable OFNS to better achieve these goals, helping to ensure that children are well-fed and ready to learn. To support these managers a culinary institute should be reinstated.

- **Commit an additional $30 million per year in the DOE's 5-Year Capital Plan to Expand the Food Court Style ("enhanced") cafeterias.** OFNS has rolled out an innovative cafeteria redesign in 34 middle and high school buildings that serve 60,000 students across the city. The Chancellor has committed $25 million for approximately 50 more schools. We join partners at Lunch 4 Learning in calling for an additional $150 million towards a planned phase-in of 300 more cafeterias over 5 years. The food court style serving line includes more daily menu options, speeds up the serving line, and provides a presentation that dramatically increases the appeal of the food.

- **Expand menu options, including access to halal and kosher meals.** Families would save an average of $900 per year per student if the school meals met their needs and they did not have to provide lunch from home every day.

- **Ensure ongoing, broad reaching and innovative communication about school food.** Universal Free School Lunch reverses decades of the discriminatory policy that separated children by income in the cafeteria. OFNS must invest in a comprehensive and creative rebranding and sustained marketing campaign. Annual funds must be dedicated to promote UFL and other initiatives such as New York Thursdays, which aims to support local NYS growers.

3. **Support community-based organizations feeding New Yorkers.**

- **Restore cuts and enhance funding for City Council discretionary initiatives that combat hunger.** These initiatives include the NYC Composting Program; Access to Healthy Food and Nutritional Education; Worker Cooperative and Business Development Initiative at SBS; Food Access and Benefits Initiative; the FoodEd Resource Hub; and food pantries.

- **Allocate $1 million to establish a new Food Justice Grant Program housed within the Mayor's Office of Food Policy that supports community-led projects to grow food**

**justice.** The purpose of the Initiative is to improve healthy food access by investing in community-based projects designed and led by the people most impacted by race, social, health, and environmental injustices.

## Ensure Every Child Is Educated

### 1. Expand full-day and infant/toddler seats.

Publicly funded early care and education is a lifeline for working families in the city, allowing parents to pursue jobs/career opportunities and provide for their families, while having children in licensed, organized and high-quality early education settings. The city must ensure that publicly funded child care actually fits working families' needs, and offer robust care options that provide a full-day of care all year-round.

Mayor de Blasio's Executive Budget expands 3-K for All by 16,500 seats but makes no significant increase in Full-Day/Year-Round Programs that serve infants and toddlers as well as provide a full day of care and summer services for three and four-year old children. Furthermore, due to a rebidding of slots, many longstanding community-based organizations which primarily serve low-income communities and communities of color are now set to only provide school-day/school-year programs, a significant barrier to accessing child care for working families. In the most recent data available for NYC pre-K, only 16% of all four-year-olds received full-day/year-round care while the remaining 84% were in school day/year programs. Meanwhile, many family child care providers who provide full-day care and the bulk of care for the youngest children, were recently awarded DOE contracts for only school-day care for three year-olds.

In order to ensure that child care and preschool is available for working families, CCC and the Campaign for Children urges the administration to make the following investments in the adopted budget:

- $10 million for approximately 1000 new full-day family child care slot for infants and toddlers.
- $17.5 million to convert over 2,000 school-day/school-year slots for 3 and 4-year old children to full-day/year-round slots.
- $17.5 million to expand center-based infant toddler capacity by approximately 700 slots.

### 2. Invest in CBOs to ensure a successful Summer Rising program

In Spring 2021, the City announced plans to run a new program, Summer Rising, in Summer 2021. A partnership between the Department of Education (DOE) and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), Summer Rising will replace traditional summer school and camp models, integrating social services and wraparound supports alongside academic remediation. Community-based organizations who operate COMPASS, SONYC, and Beacon programs are well-positioned and tasked with playing a key role in Summer Rising, working with DOE teachers to provide social-emotional support and activities to youth alongside academic enrichment.

The City plans to serve 190,000 youth through Summer Rising, a larger number than is served currently in the DYCD-contracted system and plans to expand contracts with CBOs to serve more youth. This goal is laudable but has created significant concern among CBO providers about having adequate resources to run a successful program. CBOs will need to recruit and hire additional staff, ensure those staff have the proper background checks in place, update SACC licenses, purchase supplies, and recruit youth to participate. Furthermore, current mandated staffing ratios are 15:1, requiring providers to hire more staff than in previous summers. It is also crucial that these staff be compensated fairly and beyond a minimum wage due to concerns about labor shortages. In addition to fair compensation, staff and providers need the comprehensive background checks to be done diligently. Time is of the essence in this matter to create job security and workforce stabilization.

Despite the aspirational goals of the program, and higher staffing needs, CBOs have been told their reimbursement rates will remain the same as every other summer. This is unacceptable and sets CBOs up to fail in their responsibilities in a Summer Rising partnership.

For Summer Rising to succeed, CBOs must have the resources to recruit staff and get programs up and running. DYCD and the administration must increase summer rates across COMPASS, SONYC, and Beacon contracts to at least $1700 per participant for elementary programs and $925 per participant for middle school programs.

Finally, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene must be allocated enough resources to process Comprehensive Background Checks (CBCs) for all CBO staff working in Summer Rising programs. There are significant backlogs in the CBC process that could impact the success of Summer Rising (should the permits used in Summer Rising require the CBC process), with some CBO staff reporting that it takes several months to clear staff. Furthermore, the CBC backlog must also be cleared to allow for a smooth start to after school programming in the Fall. The City should implement a similar strategy as they did to quickly clear vendors for the initial rollout of UPK, by mobilizing a dedicated unit comprised of staff from across all city agencies to make a concerted push to clear all CBO staff for Summer Rising in a timely manner.

3. **Include salary parity in Pre-K special education expansion.**

The Mayor's executive budget included a new investment of $22 million in FY 22, going up to $88 million in FY 23, for preschool special education. CCC was pleased to see an investment in preschool special education, as its long underfunding has led to a growing shortage in seats for preschoolers with developmental delays and disabilities. While these funds will help add 3-K integrated classes and hire inclusion coaches, Early Intervention transition coordinators, and preschool special education administrators, there is no funding included in FY 22 to directly address the preschool special education class shortage. Additionally, no part of this investment will fund salary parity for preschool educators in CBO classrooms, who were excluded from the city's early childhood salary parity agreement in summer 2019.

Along with our partners, CCC is calling for an additional $85 million investment to address the preschool special education class shortage, and to provide salary parity to teachers of preschool special education classes at CBOs.

4. **Ensure recovery and academic intervention efforts are available to all students, including English-language learners and students in temporary housing.**

After what was an immensely difficult year for all students, we were pleased to see the administration propose a substantial investment in an academic recovery; $500 million in FY22, $250 million in FY23, and $100 million in FY24 to promote an academic recovery through establishing baseline assessments, supporting core ELA & Math instruction, and providing extra tutoring and teacher planning time. While we are eager to see more details on supports for core instruction or how extra tutoring is offered, we urge the DOE to consider some of their most vulnerable students when developing recovery plans. For example, any supports offered outside of school hours must be sure to include students living in shelters who have limited transportation options.

Additionally, many English-language learners struggled to learn English remotely during the pandemic, and some didn't receive their legally required English as New Language classes or bilingual instruction. All of these classes need to be offered as tutoring or as part of a recovery effort, in addition to separate investments just for English-language learners. Along with our partners in the NYIC Education Collaborative, we are calling for the implementation of the ELL Roadmap, which includes summer and afterschool classes for ELLs, investments in English-language curriculum and assessments, new postsecondary readiness and digital learning initiatives, a communication plan for immigrant parents, and a separate $20 million fund for grants to community-based organizations that historically serve immigrant families to provide extra-curriculur academic enrichment for ELLs and family engagement activities.

## Combat Family Homelessness

1. **Invest in homelessness prevention and meet the needs of students in temporary housing**

As a co-lead of the Family Homelessness Coalition (FHC), we urge the Council to consider the impact of COVID-19 and economic decline on housing security and the need for prevention, improved shelter conditions and expansion of affordable housing. There are over 43,000 people living in family shelter in New York City, including close to 25,000 children under the age of 18.[1] Moreover, family homelessness is a racial justice issue, with two-thirds of shelter system made up by families with children. Nearly 95% of those families are Black and Latinx, often headed by a single mother. The trauma of homelessness and housing instability can have a long-term negative impact on children's physical and mental health, education, and future risk of housing instability during adulthood.

The pandemic and the economic downturn have had an alarming and disproportionate impact on communities that were already grappling with high risk factors associated with housing instability including: poverty, unemployment, overcrowded housing, severe rent-burden, and high numbers of families entering shelter. **CCC and FHC partners urge city leaders to focus**

[1] DHS FY19 Census Data

**on eliminating family homelessness with proven approaches to ensure no child grows up without a stable home.**

To address family homelessness crisis, solutions must be multi-pronged and include:

- **strengthened upstream prevention** with expanded neighborhood-based services, including eviction prevention counseling, aftercare supports and expanded resources for short and long-term rental assistance.
- **offering on-site shelter services** that promote child and family well-being and increase access to equitable remote learning and telehealth.
- **securing access to affordable permanent housing** through subsidies that are aligned with fair market rate, expedited shelter exits by leveraging rent assistance as well as streamlining the process for placing families into permanent housing.

The availability of $6 billion in federal aid marks an important opportunity to finally increase rent vouchers to be more competitive, and to pass Int. 146 to raise voucher amounts for greater housing stability children and families. In addition, we must expand the supply of affordable units through new construction and conversion of underutilized commercial spaces.

**2. Prioritize and target educational supports for students in temporary housing**

Hire additional staff, both in shelters and centrally, specifically to serve students and families livings in the shelter system. While the population of students in temporary housing and students living in shelters has increased, the number of shelter-based DOE family assistants has remained the same. Meanwhile, as the pandemic forced students to attend school remotely, students living in shelters consistently had some of the lowest remote attendance and interaction rates. Its clear more needs to be done onsite at shelters to support families, both now and in the future. Along with our partners in the Family Homelessness Coalition, we call on the DOE to use the new resources at its disposal to hire an additional 150 community coordinators to work in shelters with school-age children, to help families navigate DOE systems, enrollment, teacher interaction, and coordinate other educational supports.

[i] Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. "Service use among Medicaid and CHIP beneficiaries age 18 and under during COVID-19." September 2020.

[ii] Advocates for Children and Citizens' Committee for Children. "Early Inequities: How Underfunding Early Intervention Leaves Low-Income Children of Color Behind." December 2020.

[iii] Gartland, Michael. "One out of three children in New York City is food insecure, non-profit says." MSN News. March 13, 2021. https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/one-out-of-three-children-in-nyc-are-food-insecure-non-profit-says/ar-BB1eypzt?li=BBnbcA1

**Testimony of Melody Capote, Executive Director**
**Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute**
**before the**
**City Council Committee on**
**Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations**
May 25, 2021

Mr. Chairman and Members of the City Council. My name is Melody Capote, Executive Director of the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute.

I come before you today to urge the City Council to take a long and overdue step to correct the inequitable and systemically unfair methodology for funding arts and culture organizations. The bottom line is this. In what I will characterize as a good faith attempt to maintain the City of New York as the cultural capital of the world, we, and, by that, I mean the collective we, have done so at the expense of communities of color.

We so often speak about the magic of New York being its cultural diversity and its uncanny ability to blend seemingly incongruent threads of culture into a brand-new and beautiful tapestry. I wonder sometimes if people understand these very fancy words. What we are talking about ladies and gentlemen is communities of color. It is the vibrancy of a Black community that brings us jazz, blues, African dance, drumming and that vibrancy shows itself in all other areas of artistic expression. In like manner, our Latino community brings a syncopated rhythm through Bomba and Salsa that symbolizes resilience in a city where poverty appears to be job one. And, likewise, the Asian community with music and culture spanning millennia adds a richness to New York that is unmistakable.

Let's face it. Without the cultural and artistic contributions of communities of color, New York would not be the cultural capital it purports to be and that's a fact.

We have had our music and our culture stolen, replicated, resold and appropriated by people outside our community. We have more cultural icons of color who died homeless and penniless because of this very misappropriation. Our institutions are so fragile and underfunded that the common cold translates to pneumonia. The pandemic made that so very clear. All too many institutions of color closed their doors in 2020 never to have them open again. And yet we talk about culture coming back. It's not coming back; it's coming backwards.

I come to you today with one request, namely, that you make the creation of the **Cultural Equity Fund** a mandatory minimum requirement for arts and culture funding in this and subsequent fiscal years. People ask, "what can we do to make up for the decades of cultural appropriation and cultural neglect inflicted on communities of color?"

Well, ladies and gentlemen, here's the answer. Establish a Cultural Equity Fund within the executive budget and funded at a level that does three things: first, the level must recognize that, for over a century, cultural organizations of color received almost no meaningful support within the city budget; second, that level must be a recognition of the fact that a critical mass of dollars is necessary in order to allow arts and culture organizations of color to "catch up" to those organizations that have had the economic privilege for this long period of time; and third, the level should recognize the need to develop capacity and create a pipeline of talent necessary to populate these new organizations.

I'm not a lobbyist but I understand what lobbyists do. I understand that a lobbyist may say to you, "if you hold us harmless here, we won't ask you for this or that and we will come back again next year." I do not intend to see the concept of a Cultural Equity Fund sacrificed on the altar of privilege and entitlement.

I am asking that the Cultural Equity Fund receiving appropriation in this coming fiscal year of $75 million.

Thank you.

**Our Lives Matter**.

###

**Testimony for City Council Budget Hearing 05/25/2021**

Hello my name is Paullette Healy and I am a member of the Citywide Council on Special Education (CCSE) and a steering member of Parents for Responsive Equitable Safe Schools (PRESSNYC). The CCSE released a letter of budget recommendations for special education supports earlier this month which I will send along with this testimony but I did want to highlight the need for special education supports in the expansion of 3K and pay parity for our Special Education teachers staffed at 4410 and 853 schools and we cannot allow the 2000 seat deficit for students with disabilities to happen again for our earliest learners. It is also important to implement a Citywide scientifically proven literacy curriculum and supports because right now we have more people learning literacy in prison than in our schools and what does that say about us as a society? I also want to support UFT President Michael Mulgrew statement about removing the $500m allocated for testing. That $500m would be better spent funding compensatory services for the thousands of families who did n ot receive the mandated services their children with disabilities are legally entitled to along with hiring impartial hearing officers to address the thousands of families waiting for their day in court.

I also ask the Council to please fund a sustainable and equitable childcare system for our families who are essential workers. Learning Bridges was not only poorly run and turned away many families with children who had special needs but failed miserably to deliver on the 100,000 childcare seats the Mayor had promised and was grossly overbudget. That being said, I also encourage the City Council please use their collective power within their Oversight Committee to make sure the DOE does not squander this precious money we are getting through years of advocacy from organizations such as AQE, CEJ and

CFE and parents as they have already with agencies such as Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT) who has already spent $1.3 Billion during a COVID year bussing 1/3 of the students they would normally transport.

Finally, the Mayor's reopening plan needs to have a remote option to accommodate the thousands of medically fragile students and their families. The COVID vaccine only protects against the virus. It does not erase a heart defect or leukemia. We cannot afford to lose potentially hundreds of thousands of families to charter schools or for them to leave NYC altogether in search of a safer educational option. We also need to make sure all staff, not just counselors and social workers, are trained in trauma centered approaches and we invest in making sure reporting protocols are in place for staff and students to report acts of violence and bullying. Romy Vilsaint was a 10-year-old boy from Haiti who was continually bullying at school and was sent home with a unrecognized concussion inflected by a blow to the head by another student who punched Romy on a dare that led to his death later that evening. The incident was left undocumented, and the school did not inform the family of the incident at school. If Romy could die because his bullying was left unaddressed when the in-person population is at a reduced rate, what chance do our children who have been out of the buildings for 18 months have making sure their well being is a priority? Before we can safely re-open our buildings, we need to make sure restorative justice practices are in place, respect for all and no bullying allowed are not just words on a poster in a school hallway and implicit bias training including understanding behavior is a language is rolled out and with refresher courses all year can families who have stayed remote can fathom sending their most precious gifts back into the buildings.

**Testimony for City Council Budget Hearing 05/25/2021**

Hello my name is Lucas Healy and I'm a D75 student. I am here today to ask you to please make sure students like me with learning challenges please be supported by funding more specialized programs like AIMS, ACES, ASD Horizon and NEST programs along with funding so there can be a D75 program for not only K to 5 but for middle school and high school in every district. I also ask that we hire more counselors, social workers, nurses and related service providers especially bi-lingual related service providers and stop putting millions of dollars into high stakes testing. These tests don't help teachers support students who are struggling and only shine light on how students like me don't fit the DOE box and therefore are not worth educating. Students with IEPs have voices too and we want you to hear us. Please fully fund special education. We are worth the attention and investment. Thank you for listening.

# Citywide Council on Special Education

**2020 – 2021 Council Members**

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Treasurer

April 28, 2021

From: The Citywide Council on Special Education

To: Chancellor Miesha Ross-Porter
Deputy Chancellor Austin, FACE
Deputy Chief Academic Officer Christina Foti

Re: Budget Recommendations for Special Education Services

**For the Universal Benefit of Students Enrolled in All NYC Public Schools.**

1. **Smaller Class Sizes**

Recommendation:$1 Billion

NYC schools are due to receive between $2.25- $2.6 billion per year for the next two years via the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. One of the allowable uses of those funds specified in the law is to lower class size. We are urging that the Mayor and NYC Council designate $1 billion of these funds towards hiring additional teachers to lower class size, focused especially on the early grades and in schools whose surrounding communities bore a disproportionate impact of the pandemic.

That amount could pay for the salaries of about 10,000 new teachers, which could reduce class size in as many as 40,000 classrooms – as adding a new teacher lowers class size for all the other students in a school in the same grade or subject except in those instances where overcrowding already exists. In cases of overcrowding, we defer to our recommendations mentioned in the section **Expand Accessibility in Schools $750 million capital**

2. **Program to Replace Learning Bridges**

The program would be created to support families who are working parents and rely on schools for primary childcare. The program would provide additional funding for personnel to staff and support students who are part of long term school closures or when schools are placed on an indefinite pause. Along with funding for personnel, the accessibility to students with special needs to enroll and be accommodated and paraprofessionals for those who require them must be included. This, and additional training on SWD accommodations should be based out of a community

MEMBERS
Trisha Bermudez
Artelia Flowers
Tamara Foye
Noah Gotbaum
Melissa Jones
Azalia Volpe

organization, and general training on working with SWD for DOE employee run programs. In an optimum setting, a D75 site would be created for D75 trained personnel in an accessible location to accommodate D75 families and students with advanced needs.

**Improve Special Education Services**

Prior to the pandemic, DOE did not meet State mandated special education requirements. The deficiency in services has been further compounded by school closures and remote learning. Large investments in special education services can help to ensure students do not lag behind in educational milestones.

1. **Compensatory Services**.

   Recommendation: TBD
   According to DOE's report on special education services, as of January 2021, nine percent of identified students with disabilities do not receive any special education services, and 37 percent are only receiving half of the services to which they are entitled in their Individualized Education Program (IEPs). DOE should assess the need based off of existing data and fund additional special education teachers and therapists i,e., speech, occupational, and physical therapists, counselors, psychologists, etc in the Fiscal 2022 budget to provide the make-up instruction and services and give current staff the chance to work over the summer. Makeup instruction and services must be easily accessible to all special education students, without administration and begin this summer. In addition, DOE should develop and fund a plan in Fiscal 2022 and in the outyears to increase evaluation for special education services and address growth in enrollment in special education services by providing more programming

2. **Parity for Special Education Pre-K Providers and Expand Special Education Pre-K**.

   Recommendation:$85 million
   An $85 million investment would fund pay parity for special education providers as well as add enough special education pre-K seats for all eligible children. Special education pre-K is jointly funded by the City and the State, and the State sets reimbursements rates for schools. The State has failed to increase the tuition reimbursement rates for years, resulting in more than 30 community-based organizations in the City closing their special education pre-K programs due to inadequate funding. Increasing the tuition reimbursement rate is necessary to expand special education pre-K capacity and to raise pay rates of special education pre-K providers to parity with their general education counterparts. Parity will improve staff retention and stabilize special education pre-K programs. "$589 million for Early Education Initiatives funds ongoing demand for early education capacity including Pre-K for four-year old children and 3-K for three-year olds. In addition to expanding the pre-Kindergarten capacity within new buildings, these funds will allow for the identification of new locations and provide 684 new pre-Kindergarten seats. The new 3-K for All

mayoral initiative expands the reach of the Pre-K for All Initiative by providing over 1,800 early childhood seats to three-year old children across the City. These funds will create classrooms within existing buildings and new locations."

Although not funded in the Fiscal 2022 Preliminary Budget, DOE plans to operate 3K programs in every school district by next year, sooner than previously planned. This expansion excludes the addition of legally required special education pre-K seats. Prior to the pandemic, the City had projected a shortage of 1,000 to 2,000 special education pre-K seats. The demand for preschool special education classes will likely increase in the coming months, as children with disabilities who missed months of services during the pandemic are identified as needing more intensive intervention.

3. **Create a Citywide Literacy Curriculum & Program**

Recommendation:$50 million

To help teachers address the learning loss created by virtual learning, the City should allocate $50 million to hiring reading specialists trained in literacy curriculum based on scientifically proven approaches to teach reading such as but not limited to Orton Gillingham, Linda Mood-Bell, and Wilsons.

**4. Offer Small Group Tutoring**

Recommendation: $100 million

DOE should allocate at least $100 million to offer students extra instructional time and tutoring during after school hours and on the weekends to make up for the learning losses during this school year. Tutoring sessions for a cohort of five to ten students provided throughout the academic year should target students who had the most difficulty with remote school including English Language Learners. Access to extra help and tutoring should be widely available and provided by teachers, qualified community-based organization staff, and new partners and must be inclusive of students with IEPs in all ages groups

**5. Expand Specialized Programs (AIMS,ACES,ASD HORIZON, D75, etc)**

Recommendation: $20 million

With the success of the AIMS program, the DOE should budget $20 million to expand the existing 96 seats to 200 seats with representation in higher need areas left underserved during the initial pilot program. The DOE should also look at enrollment in existing ASD Horizon and NEST programs and assess how to add additional classrooms to accommodate the demand and decrease the waiting list. DOE should offer a central budget for staff to apply for the NEST and Horizon certifications. ACES programs should also be expanded for our children who need more life skills training and for families looking for an alternative pathway for graduation. This recommendation is in addition to the proposed new capacity initiative stated in the DOE Capital Plan being presented to the PEP on April 28,2021 as denoted here:

"This New Capacity Program proposes a $7.80 billion investment for an estimated building adding 55,145 seats across the
city, as well as over 2,300 seats for the new District 75 Capacity program. The program includes:

- 56 small Primary school buildings, grades pre-Kindergarten –5

- 31
  larger buildings which can be flexibly programmed for Elementary, Middle or pre-Kindergarten – 8 grade schools
- 4 Intermediate/High school buildings to serve Secondary or High Schools
- 2 PS/IS buildings with 1,612 seats will be funded for design in this plan and construction in the next plan.
- 2,344 District 75 seats in all five boroughs"

**6. Expand Accessibility in Schools $750 million capital**

Recommendation:$750 million

DOE's Fiscal 2020-2024 Capital Plan allocates $750 million for school accessibility projects. Doubling this investment would help achieve partial or full accessibility in about half of school buildings from the current target of 33 percent.

7. **Summer Education**.

Recommendation:$70.4 million

Remote Learning has been attributed to learning loss. Students need literacy and math interventions, as well as social engagement activities. Investing $70.4 million would provide summer education for students in kindergarten through 12th grade. Priority should be given to students with disabilities, English Language Learners, students in foster care, students in the juvenile and criminal justice systems, and students in temporary housing. In addition to instructional and recreational opportunities, DOE must provide English Language Learners with targeted instructional supports. Compensatory services for all students with disabilities must begin this summer. Summer education will help address learning loss issues prior to the beginning of the new school year, as well as aid in the transition to full in person learning in the fall.

8. **Extend Access to Social and Emotional Supports**

Recommendation:$125 million

Addressing the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students is just as important as the instruction students receive in schools and guidance counselors and social workers provide vital services. Investing in mental health services, especially as students navigate the impact of COVID-19, is paramount as students prepare for in-person learning in the fall. Federal funding from ARPA and CRRSA can be used to address gaps and enhancements for these services.

A. **Social Workers and Guidance Counselors**.

Recommendation:$110 million

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) recommends a ratio of one social worker per 250 general education students in each school building. While DOE reports adhering to a 1:215 social worker to student ratio, it also reports having 304 social workers serving more than one school building. The Fiscal 2022 Executive Budget should add at least $110 million to ensure that every public school has at least one full-time social worker and one full-time guidance counselor. DOE must then make a plan to ensure every school adheres to the national social worker to student ratio recommended by the NASW for general education students. Finally, DOE must ensure that every District 75 school has a

school psychologist. These positions are in addition to restoring $4.8 million for 38 social workers and $11.6 million for 130 Single Shepherd guidance counselors, both which were cut in DOE's baselined budget. Adding this funding to the Executive Budget would allow schools to begin the hiring process to be prepared for the upcoming school year.

B. **Invest in a Mental Health Continuum**.

Recommendation:$15 million

The DOE should provide direct mental health support to students with a $15 million investment in a mental health continuum as recommended by the Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline. Developing a continuum of services in 100 high need schools would give students with significant mental health needs access to direct mental health services and behavioral supports so they can remain in school.

*Gloria Corsino*

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The disparities laid bare during COVID when it comes to access and support in technology for our public-school students cannot be ignored. We saw how long it took to get learning devices to our students when they were forced to shelter in for our health and safety. We still have students waiting for a learning device after more than 13 months. Our students in temporary and transitional housing had to sue the DOE in order for a plan to be implemented to update Wi-Fi capacity in our family shelters. Devices that were delivered in many cases were damaged or came with broken chargers or no chargers at all.

To make things worse, the DOE purchased only iPADS which were not grade appropriate for middle and high school students, forcing parents and schools to buy keyboards or hand out Chromebooks, paid by school or PTA fundraising or technology grants. Assistive technology (AT) assessments were on hold. These are evaluations done to gauge supports for children who may be non-verbal, hearing or vision impaired, experience cognitive delay or have challenges with a number of different learning challenges. Those waiting for an AT device were kept in limbo leaving students waiting for these tools unsupported. Ed tech programs and applications that could help support students were either incompatible or could not be downloaded onto DOE devices. Many of the programs and apps that were already downloaded onto iPads or assigned by teachers had lax or nonexistent privacy protections, in many cases sharing personal student data in a manner that appeared to violate the provisions of the New York State Student Privacy Law.

The City of New York negotiated affordable internet access through the end of the school year 2019-2020 for families who needed an internet connection and the DOE provided internet- enabled iPads to families without devices, but some internet service providers (ISPs) required families to subscribe long term for temporarily free internet, putting families at risk of receiving expensive, unaffordable invoices after the free period unless they took the initiative to cancel. Also, some ISPs required families to use credit cards to sign up for essential services, leaving out those without credit cards. Some ISPs required families who were paying with debit cards to pay exorbitant fees of several hundred dollars to initiate services and/or refused to provide services to families with abandoned accounts and delinquent balances, thereby preventing students from having any access to their online classes and assigned homework. . No family should have to choose whether to put food on the table or pay for internet services so their child can attend school.

In many cases, when students were able to log onto their online classes, the size of these classes were egregiously large, with as many as sixty students or more, making meaningful student engagement and teacher feedback nearly impossible. Even in normal years, NYC class sizes are far too large for most students to receive an equitable and adequate opportunity to learn.

We offer the following recommendations to address these established inequities.

## Class Size Reduction: $250 million

During remote learning, we saw class sizes balloon to over 60 students in one class. We saw NEST inclusion classes with autistic children rise to 35 students when the usual cap is 20. We saw teachers tasked with juggling 300 students in various cohorts per week. And as a result, our children became disengaged. Attendance took a dramatic dip. Our students became despondent and disconnected. Learning problems were left unaddressed or worse, undetected. And our teachers struggled with properly assessing and supporting the needs of their students in a virtual setting. Both teachers and students suffered virtual meeting fatigue, depression, anxiety and were overwhelmed by the demands.

Even in an ordinary school year, our class sizes are too large to meet the needs of most NYC students, many of whom are disadvantaged, have disabilities or are multilingual learners. Average class sizes are 15-30 percent

larger than in the rest of the state outside NYC, and in fact, larger than they were when the state's highest court in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case concluded that the class sizes in the city's public schools were too big to provide students with their right to a sound basic education.

Therefore, we strongly support the City Council's proposal in its preliminary budget response that $250 million be invested in reducing class size next year, targeted first for struggling schools with especially vulnerable students.[1]

This level of funding could pay for the salaries of about 2,500 new teachers, which could reduce class size in as many as 10,000 classrooms – as adding a new class with a new teacher reduces class size for all the other classes in a school in the same grade or subject.

The research shows that smaller classes generate more learning, stronger engagement, and better outcomes for kids in every way that can be measured, especially for students who need help the most.

Next year, NYC children will need smaller classes more than ever before, to make up for the many losses they have suffered over the course of the last year due to the pandemic. Smaller classes would also help provide the social distancing that many health experts say may be required.

## Infrastructure: $175 Million

Our schools are overcrowded, with more than 500,000 students enrolled in schools that are over 100% utilization. Smaller classes and social distancing will require more space. With an additional $125 million spent annually on to finance bonds to build and expand schools could generate about $3.6 billion, according to the Independent Budget Office. This would be sufficient to create 26,550 seats, in addition to the 57,000 seats in the current plan since capital expenses are paid for through bonds and half of the expense is covered by the state.

If the DOE leased some of the 17 parochial school buildings that have recently closed, space could be acquired more quickly and potentially at less expense. Another $25 million annually on facility upgrades would generate an additional $700 million to purchase improved ventilation systems. Some of these funds could also be provided via the multi-billion-dollar Infrastructure program proposed by President Biden.

## Grade/Developmentally Appropriate Devices- $20 million

According to the city, between last year and this year, 500,000 iPads were purchased for New York City public school students, which included unlimited cellular data plans, doubled as hotspots, and loaded with various ed tech apps.[2] As of July 2020, some 321,500 internet-enabled iPads reached students' hands, officials said.[3]

And yet many middle school and high school students struggled with completing assignments on the DOE issued iPADs since keyboards were not included, necessary for writing essays or assignments that required long passages of text. Students with disabilities struggled with enabling applications such as voice-to-text

[1] https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2021/04/Fiscal-2022-Preliminary-Budget-Response-1.pdf#page21
[2] https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doitt/news/t00001/doitt-commissioner-jessica-tisch-s-testimony-before-city-council-committees-land-use-and
[3] https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/7/29/21347043/remote-learning-devices-distribution-nyc

or Spoken Content that would help support reading and writing challenges. Measures need to be taken to address these needs as soon as possible, before more children fall behind.

We urge the DOE to supply keyboards, stylus, chargers, and student support applications for existing iPADS. We encourage the purchase of Chromebooks or laptops going forward for all students enrolled in middle of high school. The DOE should also provide tech support in a more localized way instead of how it has been handled centrally. We recommend dispatching tech specialists to the Borough Support Offices to facilitate district- specific support for tech liaisons in the schools, to enable speedier service to lessen the time a student is without a workable device. We also recommend these specialists be bilingual or multilingual to support language access for those families experiencing difficulty setting up the learning devices because instructions are in English.

## Universal Broadband

We urge the City of New York to prioritize installation of high-speed broadband infrastructure in public housing; in neighborhoods whose median wealth is below the citywide median wealth; and in low-income communities spatially situated amid higher income communities. We also urge the DOE to renegotiate free internet subscriptions with internet & cellular service providers for the entirety of the school year 2021-2022, including the summer of 2021, regardless of the possibility of full school reopening in Fall 2021.[4]

We cannot allow these barriers to continue. Regardless of what education will look like in the future, caregivers of public-school students will need to receive communications from their schools and central DOE via digital means, dependent on access to reliable internet connection for essential and critical information related to their children's education. With or without snow days, our children will continue to learn remotely and will still need infrastructure to support that.

[4] As detailed in January 2020, the City of New York released the **NYC Internet Master Plan**, which promises to deliver universal high-speed broadband to all New Yorkers: "The digital divide in New York is considered a barrier to economic opportunity for residents and small businesses and a threat to long-term economic growth in the City. While many New Yorkers use a mobile connection and a home connection, New Yorkers increasingly need both connections to make full use of the internet. 40 percent of households do not have this level of connectivity today. 18 percent of residents – more than 1.5 million New Yorkers – have neither a mobile connection nor a home broadband connection. This significant portion of the City faces barriers to education, employment, banking, healthcare, social networks and government services that other residents do not." https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/010-20/de-blasio-administration-releases-internet-master-plan-city-s-broadband-future

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**Center for Court Innovation**
**New York City Council**
**Committee on Finance**
**May 25, 2021**

Good morning Chair Dromm and esteemed Councilmembers. Since its inception, the Center for Court Innovation has supported the vision embraced by New York City Council to reduce unnecessary and harmful involvement in the justice system wherever possible and to build public safety through sustainable solutions. With the populations we serve facing ongoing violence and a public health crisis that disproportionately impacts Black and brown communities, realizing this vision is now more important than ever.[1] The Center's longstanding partnership with Council has helped bring this vision to life through evidence-based and racially just programming, which includes:

- community-based programs that reduce crime and shrink the footprint of police;
- diversion programs that route low level arrests away from costly court appearances;
- proven alternatives to jail and prison that reduce recidivism for people charged with felonies;
- anti-gun violence programming staffed by credible messengers;
- recognizing housing instability as a contributing factor to intersection with the justice system.

In addition to the investments Council has made in improving our justice system to be fairer and more humane, we ask that Council renew four key initiatives to pre-pandemic levels, given their value reducing incarceration and operating throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond:

1. **Innovative Criminal Justice Programs:** funding that permits the Center to innovate quickly to respond to urgent community needs. Over the pandemic, despite a halving of funding, we piloted innovated approaches in responding to gun violence, street homelessness, and incidental involvement in the justice system due to quality-of-life crimes.
2. **Driver Accountability Program:** A proportionate response achieving accountability in Vehicle and Traffic Law cases.
3. **Brooklyn Felony Alternatives to Incarceration Court (ATI):** An evidence-based pilot program for people otherwise facing jail or prison time.
4. **Pre-arraignment Diversion, Project Reset:** Originally funded in the outer boroughs for FY20 in partnership between the administration and Council, funding only continued for Bronx programming through Council support.

Our firsthand experience in each of these priority areas uniquely positions us to serve as a model that City Council can look to as it considers the development and support of initiatives that respond to the needs of New Yorkers. In each instance, our aim is to provide a meaningful and proportionate response, to treat all 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.

In addition to renewing four key Council-funded initiatives, we ask Council to continue to support the **Points of the Agreement (POA) to responsibly close Rikers** so we can provide New Yorkers with the needed investments to lower the jail population. The POA works to reduce reliance on policing, limit the use of traditional systems, and lift up community-based alternatives. We support Council's preliminary budget response to the Mayor's January plan in requesting $2.9 million for Project Reset pre-arraignment services that the Center operated in FY20. We similarly request Council's continued support for both pre- and post-arraignment services covered in the POA.

## Shrinking the Footprint of Police Through Alternative Investments: Driver Accountability Program and Innovative Criminal Justice Programs

Spurred by ongoing police violence, there is public support to reallocate certain responses from police into community-based approaches. Municipalities across New York worked to submit police reform plans by the April 1st deadline, and the Center's expertise through sustainable community-driven solutions that enhance public safety, can serve as the roadmap for many of these changes. 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.[2] This also includes reimagining responses to driving violations, gun violence, and housing safety. These programs reduce public contact with police and support the vision of the POA, shifting the work of incarceration and traditional systems to community-centered and restorative justice alternatives.

### Innovative Criminal Justice Programs

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. Unfortunately, during the FY21 budget our award was halved. It is this funding that permits us to flexibly respond to the immediate needs we see in our communities, pilot ideas, and evaluate them. Due to COVID-19, we focused our funding on housing stability, mental health responses, and domestic violence programming. However, because of these cuts, we had to make hard choices. Among them were reductions in supports for anti-gun violence programming, child trauma support, and DWI screenings and assessments during a time when traffic safety deaths reached some of the highest levels since the start of Vision Zero, amongst others. Renewed funding by

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. 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.

With this funding, we are providing trauma-informed social services to system-involved individuals facing mental health and/or substance use challenges. Our Midtown Community Court's Client Navigator works with some of Manhattan's most vulnerable individuals—those who are homeless, battling mental illness and/or substance use disorders—following an arrest and throughout their court involvement. Through our Staten Island Justice Center, we provide clinical support and restorative programming for court-involved youth who have mental health needs. This support has also permitted planning around new approaches to gun violence, with the Center ready to leverage recently attained funding to implement coordination of social services with pre-trial diverted populations that are at risk of escalated justice involvement.

**Driver Accountability Program**

The Driver Accountability Program (DAP) provides a constructive and restorative response to dangerous driving and works to change the risky driving behavior of people charged with driving-related offenses in criminal court. Preliminary research suggests that the program changes participant behavior and encourages safer driving. Piloted at the Red Hook Community Justice Center in 2015, the program has since expanded throughout Brooklyn, Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island with funding from City Council. The Center seeks funding to sustain those operations and expand into the borough of Queens. Funding will also be used to support a second tier of the program that offers a more intensive restorative response for the most serious cases involving serious injury or death.

The need for more meaningful, effective, and equitable interventions on traffic-related cases has never been more urgent. Last year, at least 243 people were killed in crashes on New York City streets, more than any other year since our Mayor pledged to eliminate traffic deaths through the Vision Zero Initiative.[3] Funding for DAP was cut 20% during the pandemic, which correlated with a decrease in relevant referrals. Despite a cut in funding, for FY22,the Center proposes to build upon its current operations and further expand the program in two significant ways: (1) a geographical expansion to the borough of Queens so that defendants in every borough have access to DAP; and (2) to implement a new, more intensive version of the program that will be available citywide in cases of serious injury or death. In addition, there has been a backlog of thousands of cases across the City that were administratively adjourned, or unable to be handled, due to court closures that the Center hopes to assist on diverting from the court process as we adjust to a post-pandemic landscape.

**Reduction of Unnecessary Incarceration: The Points of Agreement, the Center's pre-arraignment diversion model: Project Reset, and Brooklyn Felony ATI**

Responsibly reducing incarceration requires a long-term commitment to innovative responses. In 2017, the Center played a central role in facilitating the plan to shutter the notorious jail complex on Rikers Island by coordinating the Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform, otherwise known as the Lippman Commission. This achievement was a monumental step forward in the mission to reduce incarceration in New York and included Council's commitment to significant community investment. These commitments were laid out in the Points of Agreement (POA).

In another huge leap forward, in early 2020, New York State passed landmark reforms to the bail statute with the goals of reducing the pretrial jail population. In the year following reforms, there was a 40 percent decline in New York City's pretrial jail population.[4] However, beginning July 2, amendments to the initial reforms exposed more people to bail and detention. From July through November 1, the effect of those amendments resulted in a 7 to 11 percent increase in the pretrial jail population relative to the jail reductions brought about by the original law.[5] Over time, as judges set bail in more cases that would have been ineligible for it under the original reforms, this increase will grow, with our research predicting a possible 16 percent increase in New York City's pretrial jail numbers.[6]

The Center urges Council to honor the community investment and proposals laid out in the POA. Only with adequate funding for programming set forth in the POA, which includes community investments in vulnerable neighborhoods, can we reduce the jail population enough to close Rikers and realize the vision laid out for a safer, fairer New York. Additionally, alternatives to incarceration can prevent unnecessary disruption to individual lives, while providing linkages to additional services to decrease criminogenic factors that would otherwise grow in confinement. Specifically, included in the POA are three items the Center is prepared to bring to scale or support:

- Community Justice Center in Far Rockaways;
- Expansion of pre-arraignment diversion programming; and
- Community Based Restorative Justice

The Center has a proven track record for implementing data-driven programs like these that reduce incarceration without decreasing public safety. Council renewal of the Center's Project Reset funding for Fiscal Year 2022 would honor the spirit of the POA's inclusion of an expansion of pre-arraignment diversion programming. This program is cost-efficient and helps avoid unnecessary incarceration and the long-term adverse impacts it has on individuals, families, and communities. In addition, by renewing Council funding for Brooklyn's Felony ATI program, Council would advance the goals to responsibly close the Rikers jail complex.

**The Center's pre-arraignment diversion model, Project Reset**

Project Reset diverts New Yorkers with misdemeanor arrests away from the court system through community-based programming and access to opportunities. In 2021, as the justice system grapples anew with its enduring inequities, Project Reset offers relief from the collateral consequences participants might otherwise experience if arraigned for a low-level crime, such as legal discrimination in housing, immigration, and employment matters, or even a bench warrant

for failing to appear. As a result of sweeping criminal justice reform legislation that went into effect in January 2020 and due to the significant DAT case backlog resulting from pandemic-related court delays, a large number of misdemeanants are eligible for diversion. Looking ahead, if Project Reset were only to continue in one or two boroughs, the resulting patchwork of programming would lead to an inequitable delivery of crucial services for City residents. To ensure that Project Reset can serve all eligible individuals, citywide funding for the program is imperative.

Reset is currently supported by the Schedule C in the Bronx. Bronx Reset pivoted quickly at the onset of COVID-19, leveraging technology and video meetings, to continue facilitating restorative justice circles for participants, both providing connection to community during the isolating period of the pandemic's peak, and a diversion from in-person arraignments during the public health crisis. The citywide low arrest levels resulted in fewer cases being referred to the program. The program's contact rate for eligible referrals was also affected, as the pandemic impacted the accuracy and efficacy of contact information due to disconnected phone numbers, changed addresses, or other factors. Nevertheless, in 2020, Bronx Reset supported participants remotely so they could successfully complete the program and have their cases never touch the court docket, and the negative consequences that come with a pending case. Additionally, many improvements were made to the process so that the Bronx can continue to divert as many participants as qualify for the program going forward.

Separate from Council support, the Administration supported the rollout of Reset citywide in 2019, with services concluding in 2020 due to the pandemic. As a possible bridge to ensure equitable access to diversion, pre-arraignment diversion is a component of the Points of Agreement. Project Reset, as a pre-arraignment diversion program, helps reduce the jail population by decreasing the likelihood of failure to appear bench warrants at arraignment for low level Desk Appearance Tickets (DATs). We appreciate Council's reaffirmation of its commitment to Project Reset in the preliminary budget response to the Mayor's financial plan, where Council requested the $2.9 million annual to fund Reset citywide. We additionally are hopeful by the recent financial plan that calls for the use of the 2019 POA to close Rikers as a tool to fund Reset, among the $3.5 million set aside for both pre-arraignment and post-arraignment diversion. In operating pre-arraignment diversion services, we recognize the nearly half population of individuals who do not provide contact information to police to be reached for Reset services. We hope that same day diversion for those who attend their arraignment date can similarly be made equitably available throughout the city so that those who may be most distrusting of law enforcement, may have a short interaction with the justice system.

**Brooklyn Felony ATI Court**

Individuals convicted of felonies have an alternative to Rikers Island in Brooklyn. The Brooklyn Felony Alternatives to Incarceration Court (FATI) offers community-based interventions and rigorous judicial monitoring for felony cases which can decrease the use of jail and prison sentences and potentially lead to reduced criminal dispositions. Nearly 90% of FATI participants flagged for mental health needs.[7] To address these needs, the program is staffed by a team of resource coordinators, social workers, and mental health counselors who conduct independent assessments, prepare recommendations for programming and supervision, provide

referrals to community-based providers, offer ongoing case management, supervision and compliance monitoring, and pilot new services, such as restorative justice interventions. The program and court part seek to significantly increase the use of ATIs, support, and supervision offered to individuals charged with felonies and provide a model for jurisdictions across the country interested in enhancing public safety and reducing incarceration.

The FATI team has offered services since launching in January 2020 and is prepared to continue providing case management and counseling services to felony cases in the coming year. Although the trajectory of the program was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic—which caused the closure of the court and grand juries, delayed adjournment dates, and backlogs in the courts—it is connected to a robust offering of services through community partners and in-house programs. Since FATI's inception, 73 participants entered programming, with nearly 90% of closed cases closing successfully. The program fulfills the need in Brooklyn to provide alternative responses to felony cases that are tailored to the needs the participants present, addressing immediate concerns as well as longer-term treatments. Brooklyn Felony ATI Court has established the team, the infrastructure, and the capacity to act on the momentum and serve more participants in the next fiscal year.

**Anti-Gun Violence**

Responding to an increase in gun violence requires community-based efforts to reduce violence, coupled with court-based efforts to divert people back into community. As an organization that prides itself on its reputation both in community and in systems, the Center is positioned to address the intersection of court-based and community-based anti-gun violence work. From a systems perspective, we are crafting diversion programming for individuals brought in on gun possession charges but released into pre-trial supervision during the pendency of their case. In community, our proposed pilot will target Crisis Management System-type services to target individuals who are suspected of having possessed a gun.

In both Brooklyn and the Bronx, the Center works to prevent gun violence by actively engaging those at risk of being involved in violence, building community movements against violence, and providing supports and opportunities to community members in need. Gun violence surged over 200% in 2020, and this reality motivated policymakers and community member alike to call for solutions to effectively end it. Research shows that community-led efforts can create community safety without involving the police. In groundbreaking research on the drivers of gun violence, Center staff interviewed over 300 young people. Our researchers found widespread experiences of violence and the fear of police are primary motivations for carrying a gun.[8]

Community violence can be effectively addressed through prevention programs. These programs, run by the Center across the City, "interrupt violence" without the use of police and are staffed by credible messengers. The resulting trust, respect, and empowerment of residents are especially crucial to the success of these programs. The Center has also launched the RISE Project to address the intersection of intimate partner violence and gun violence citywide. Through collaborating and partnering with communities and stakeholders, we seek funding to continue meaningful interventions that are geared toward keeping youth and communities safe,

and out of jail or prison. This funding is critical to ensure we realize a safer, better, and fairer New York City.

Through collaborating and partnering with communities and stakeholders, we seek funding to continue meaningful interventions that are geared toward keeping youth and communities safe, reducing their contact with police and the justice system, and ultimately keeping them out of jail or prison. This funding is critical to ensure we realize a safer, better, and fairer New York City.

**Housing as a Justice Issue: Neighborhood Safety Initiatives**

This summer laid bare the long-standing inequities in access to safe and affordable housing. The threat of eviction looms large for many households, with renters in communities of color at the greatest risk of facing housing insecurity.[9] Access to quality, sustainable, and safe housing is a crucial element to the conversation around social justice and equity. Our research shows that 18%-25% of our Felony ATI program participants are experiencing homelessness.[10] And, much of the gun violence experienced over the past year took place in the City's public housing developments. The Center works to build resident power and address issues of safety in public housing developments, ultimately shrinking the footprint of law enforcement and resident contact with the justice system in some of New York's historically under resourced neighborhoods. Funding for the Neighborhood Safety Initiative (NSI) is due to sunset in June 2022, and we hope for Council to support the continuation of these services to the communities we serve in public housing.

To respond to the public safety needs of public housing residents, the Center is working across the City through its NeighborhoodStat (NStat) program to proactively address these issues. NStat, of which the Center's Neighborhood Safety Initiatives (NSI) is a part, uses deep and lasting engagement to build strong resident networks, utilizes the knowledge and the relationships embedded within these networks to ascertain resident perspectives, goals, and safety concerns; and then supports resident-led efforts to design and implement the solutions with the help of local agencies, organizations, and neighbors. NStat staff help guide this process—gathering data to inform decisions, identifying partners, and coordinating the intervention. In short, NStat and NSI create opportunities for residents to think through new approaches to safety and then works with them to make these ideas happen. Our NSI program was also actively engaged in COVID-19 relief. Through mobilizing of residents and creating mutual aid networks, approximately 10,000 COVID relief packages including food, drinking water, PPE, personal hygiene products, cleaning supplies, and other essential goods were delivered to 7,000 households or 45,000 NYCHA residents. The Center asks that Council urge the Administration to fully fund and baseline the NStat program within the Mayor's Action Plan (MAP) to ensure this important program continues.

**Conclusion**

Responsibly shrinking the footprint of police, reducing unnecessary incarceration, and improving safety for public housing requires honoring investments in community-based programming and off-ramps for individuals coming in contact with the justice system. We are

committed to partnering with Council to advance the POA and realize the closure of Rikers, while building public safety through community driven solutions for all New Yorkers. We thank the Council for its continued partnership and will be available to answer any questions you may have.

## Notes

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**Comments before the New York City Council Committee on Finance**

**May 25, 2021**

Good afternoon. My name is Christie Peale and I am the Executive Director at the Center for NYC Neighborhoods. I would like to thank Chair Fromm and the members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to speak.

**About the Center for NYC Neighborhoods**

The Center promotes and protects affordable homeownership in New York so that middle- and working-class families are able to live in strong, thriving communities. Established by public and private partners, the Center meets the diverse needs of homeowners throughout New York state by offering free, high-quality housing services. Since our founding in 2008, our network has assisted more than 250,000 homeowners. Our clients are over 60% people of color, with an average household income of $44K. We have provided more than $65 million to community-based partners. The Center's work is counter-cyclical – our services are in higher demand in times of crisis – and we have developed expertise in responding quickly, in partnership with the government, to achieve stabilization and safety for New Yorkers.

**Affordable Homeownership is Vital to NYC's Housing Ecosystem**

Affordable homeownership is a crucial component of New York CIty's vibrant and diverse neighborhoods. In the neighborhoods where we work, affordable homeownership means families can build equity while also benefiting from stable housing costs in a city of rapidly increasing rents. When homeowners are able to afford their mortgage payments, keep up with their bills and make needed repairs, they are able to live, grow and thrive in the city where they have invested their time and energy, sent their children to schools, and pursued their livelihoods. The majority are also able to rent out apartments in their homes to tenants, many of whom pay below-market rents. They are able to continue to contribute to their communities, participate in local institutions, build wealth, and provide stable homes for their children. For these reasons, we believe that supporting working- and middle-class homeowners and their communities while investing in new homeownership opportunities for working families must be a top priority for the future of New York City.

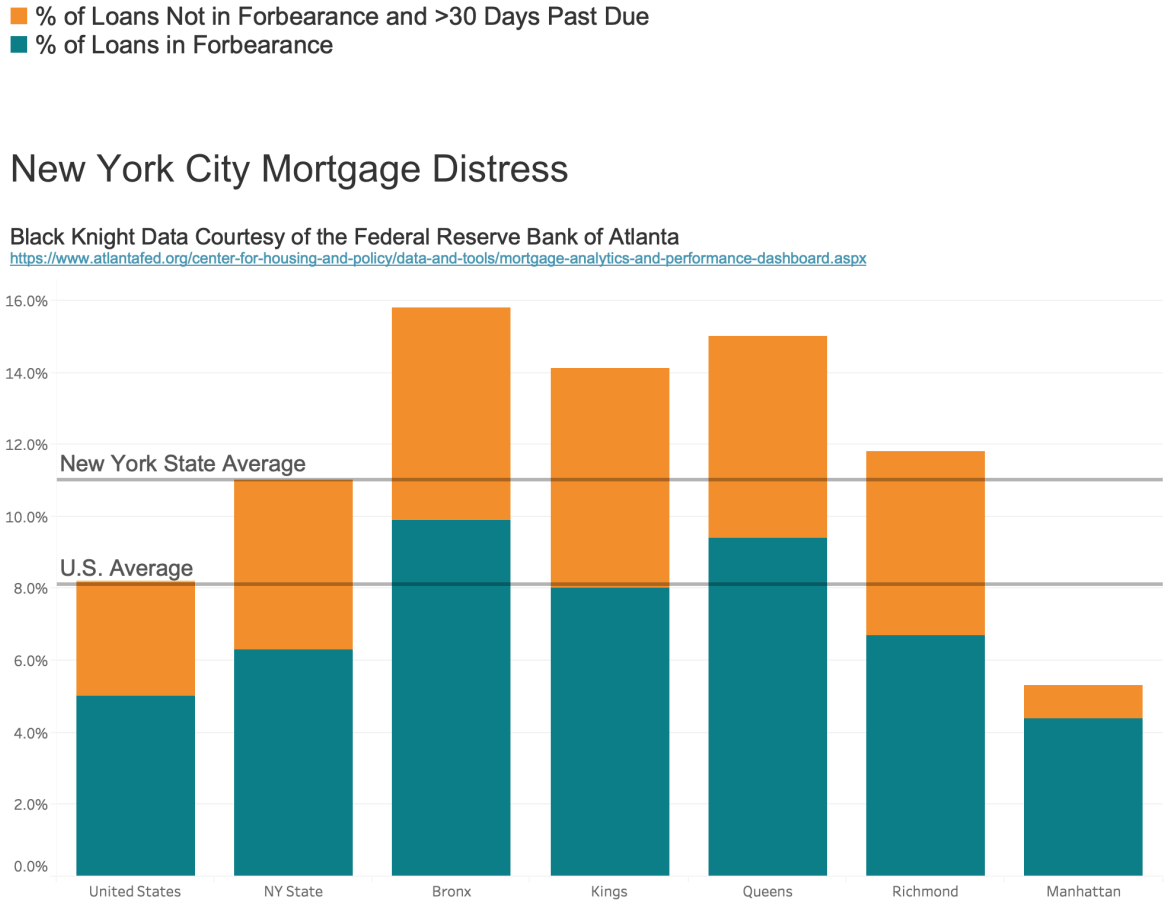
**Homeownership and COVID-19**

In the wake of the global coronavirus pandemic, New York's low- and moderate-income homeowner households face daunting challenges as they strive to meet mortgage payments and avoid foreclosure. Thousands of New York's workers face unemployment and income loss, while those employed in essential businesses continue to work while exposed to greater risks of contracting infection.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are disproportionately felt among New York's Black and Brown communities. Majority minority communities have seen higher rates of COVID-19 infections and deaths,

and we are concerned there is more pain to come, especially as eviction moratoriums and foreclosure forbearance extensions are uncertain. Our experience has shown that foreclosure prevention is the best way for families to keep their equity and their homes. We are desperate to avoid the mistakes of the financial crisis of 2008, where Queens alone lost over 22,000 Black homeowners.

New York City has significantly higher levels of mortgage distress than the rest of New York State, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. As of December, Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx had significantly higher levels of mortgage forbearance as well as higher percentages of mortgages not in forbearance but more than 30 days past due.




These data demonstrate that when forbearances and the federal and state foreclosure moratoria end, a massive swath of homeowners face the prospect of foreclosure. COVID-19 and the resulting job losses and medical bills have left thousands of families in precarious financial situations. While the pandemic slows in New York City, the economic effects will last far longer. As of March 2021, New York City's unemployment rate stands at 11.2%, far higher than the state rate of 8.5% and nearly triple the city's rate in March 2020 of 4.2%.

Funding for housing counseling and legal services is critical to ensure that New York City homeowners have assistance. The Center anticipates that these funds can be used to help homeowners coming out of forbearance to negotiate equitable loan modifications with mortgage servicers to help keep

homeowners affected by COVID-19 in their homes. Without these funds, our experience has shown that homeowners are often forced into post-forbearance terms favorable to the mortgage servicers, such as balloon payments and increased monthly mortgage payments, which can force families out of their homes over the long term.

**Solutions: Fund Homeowner Services in the FY 2022 City Budget**

The Center for NYC Neighborhoods has developed innovative, high-quality services to help keep low- and moderate-income New York City homeowners from losing their homes. This year the Center requests roughly $8,000,000 in City Council initiative and discretionary funding to support a streamlined approach to financial and physical resiliency for homeowners across New York City through a single point of entry.

- **$4,000,000 in City Council funding for foreclosure prevention. Tracking number 104128.** This program aims to achieve financial and physical resiliency for homeowners across New York City through housing counseling and legal services to prevent foreclosure and stabilize working and middle class homeowners.
- **$3,000,000 for HomeFix to support home repairs for working class homeowners. Tracking Number 94148.** This program is providing direct, low-interest home improvement loans to owners of 1-4 family homes in the five boroughs.
- **$50K ask each of 8 council members for Flood Help NY**. **Tracking Number 105190.** FloodHelpNY is a platform for engaging and informing New York City homeowners about how they can protect their home and finances from flooding that is expected to worsen with rising sea levels caused by climate change.
- **$10K ask each of 20 council members for the Homeowner Help Desk. Tracking number 102418**. The Homeowner Help Desk brings advice, assistance and referrals to homeowners in their neighborhood.
- **$100K for Black Homeownership initiatives from the Queens Borough Delegation. Tracking Number 104412.**
- **$100K for Black & Latinx Homeownership initiatives from the Brooklyn Borough Delegation**. - **Tracking number 104433.**
- **$100K for Latinx Homeownership initiatives from the Bronx Borough Delegation**. **Tracking number 104449**
- **$100K for Resiliency initiatives in low-to-moderate income communities from the Staten Island Borough Delegation**. **Tracking number 105178.**

We greatly appreciate the Council's support for homeowners and homeowner services in the Fiscal Year 2022 budget, and we look forward to working with you to continue to promote affordable, equitable homeownership in New York City. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

**New York City Council**

**City Finance Committee Hearing**

**May 25, 2021**

**Testimony of the Center for Family Representation**

This testimony is submitted by the Center for Family Representation (CFR). CFR is the New York City countywide assigned indigent defense provider for parents who are Respondents in abuse and neglect proceedings in Queens and Manhattan family courts. CFR has maintained all its operations during the pandemic. CFR was founded in 2002 to support indigent parents in raising their children safely and minimize the City's reliance on foster care. Currently, pursuant to a contract with the New York City Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), CFR represents on average 1300 new clients each year in these proceedings, and in supplemental proceedings like custody, guardianship, visitation and termination of parental rights cases. Pursuant to our contract, we also provide representation on interim appeals and at least 10 final appeals a year. Since becoming a high volume provider in 2007, CFR has served over 11,000 parents with more than 18,470 children. More than 55% of our clients' children avoid foster care altogether, and for those that do enter care, the average time they spend in care is half as long as the citywide average prior to 2007 when CFR became a high volume countywide provider. **We estimate we've saved taxpayers $48 million in foster care costs.**

Our testimony today addresses the importance of increased funding for the Legal Services for the Working Poor and Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers (which funds CFR's *Home for Good Practice);* increased funding for the DOVE initiative; increasing the revenue allocated to the Speaker's Right to Family Advocacy Initiative, and restoring CFR's Article 10 funding to FY21 levels in FY22. Specifically,

- **We are asking the City Council to insure that MOCJ and OMB restore FY22 funding for CFR and the other Family Defense providers at the FY 21 level. The current FY 22 contracts are baselined at an amount that represents an $8.7 million decrease across the providers (more than 30% of our budgets) and must be restored;**

- **We are asking that the City Council allocate $325,000 from Legal Services for the Working Poor and Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers to fund CFR's Home for Good Practice;**
- **We are asking the City Counsel to allocate $50,000 in DOVE funding to support CFR's social worker and legal advocacy for survivors of domestic violence as they navigate the family regulation system; and**
- **We are asking the City Council to fully fund the *Right to Family Advocacy Initiative* at the level requested in FY 21 which provides representation to parents during ACS investigations, avoids unnecessary family separation and case filings, and provides representation in SCR hearings.**

The COVID-19 crisis threw ACS, the foster system, and the family court (the 'Family Regulation system) into disarray. The harrowing cascade of physical and mental health consequences, economic devastation, and social disruption have fallen disproportionately on the families we serve: low-income communities and Black and Brown people. These conditions have exacerbated the harm of family separation for parents and children, created conditions ripe for family regulation involvement, and slowed the progress on existing cases. It has also made the filing of termination of parental rights petitions -- an attempt to dissolve a family -- more likely because cases are pending longer and families are less able to fulfill the service plan requirements required to regain custody of their children. CFR, along with the other three family defense providers (Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services and Neighborhood Defender Services) have met this challenge and have continued to provide effective representation to parents during this crisis in and out of court. As we outline in detail below, it is clear that our clients and their families will face more hardship for the foreseeable future, with serious emotional and legal consequences, as a result of the many interruptions in services, limitations on in-person contact, and restricted access to due process in family court that has continued for more than a year.

The primary goal of our representation is to ameliorate the underlying issues that drive families into the Family Regulation system, and to reduce the harmful consequences of system involvement, including criminal charges, housing and income loss, education issues and immigration status. We currently serve over 3400 respondent parents in Article 10 cases each year (with 1300 being new clients). Since our founding in 2002, our services have benefited over 11,000 families, most of whom are Black and Brown and live in the most marginalized low-income communities in New York City. Our model was the first of its kind in the country and has produced results. For our clients whose children do enter foster care, their stay is less than the city's average. With our model of representation in place, the foster care census has been reduced by almost 50% in New York City from over 17,000 children in 2007, when the city began contracting with institutional providers, to just under 8,000 today. We also provide dozens of training sessions to more than 300 professionals around the city, state and country. This includes judges, court personnel, attorneys, social workers, and parent advocates.

## I. Family defense provider FY 22 revenue must be maintained at at least FY 21 levels.

Despite more than a decade of excellent interdisciplinary representation that is saving the City substantial monies in foster care costs, the Mayor's budget has a dramatic DECREASE in funding for CFR and the other family defense providers in FY 22. This is not related to COVID-19 and the most recent budget concerns that are affecting the City, but actually reflects a funding pattern that has occurred for the past four years. A decision was made to baseline our contracts at $8.7 million less than we were allocated in FY 16 and in each year since then we have had to work hard and wait a long time to have our budget restored to necessary levels. It is imperative that the City Council require that the Mayor restore our FY 22 funding to FY 21 levels in the budget that is passed on June 30. ***This is all the more important because MOCJ has informed us that we will not receive COLA monies in the FY22 contract, unlike the previous years.***

Our effectiveness in reducing the length of foster care is well documented. The largest study of parental representation in family court ever conducted found that holistic, interdisciplinary institutional representation in New York City significantly reduces the time children spend in foster care.[5] This study compared length of foster care stays for the children of BxD, BDS, and CFR's clients with the children of parents who were assigned solo attorneys pursuant to Article 18-b of the County Law, Indigent Defense Legal Panel Plan. The study found that representation by multidisciplinary providers reduced children's time in foster care by nearly 4 months during the 48 months following filing of the petition, through earlier reunification outcomes translating to up to nearly $40 million in annual savings in foster care expenditures for New York City. According to the study, these outcomes were achieved without any difference in safety to children between the two groups.

### A. History of the Article 10 contracts and funding

The current contract term for the four family defense providers is FY 14-FY 20, but MOCJ has extended the contracts for a seventh year, and will extend the contract again for an 8th. The base revenue in the Article 10 contracts for FY 22 is currently set at FY 16 levels even though each year since then, MOCJ has provided each of the Article 10 providers increased revenue for FY 17, FY 18, FY19, FY 20, and FY 21 through the contract amendment process. MOCJ has not given us assurances that it can do the same for FY 22.

Although we are requesting that the family defense providers receive the same funding as last year, even FY 20 and FY 19 revenue levels were insufficient to meet the total cost of the practice and we expect it will be insufficient for FY 21. The revenue has not kept pace with increased costs in salary, rent and health insurance. As well, over time, the backlog created in the courts has made it more likely that every Article 10 client would face supplemental proceedings—when it takes longer to resolve a case, there is a greater likelihood that additional matters will be filed against a client—and under the current structure of our contracts, our revenue corresponds to

pending *client* load, rather than pending case load. The result is an extreme shortfall in our budgets because the City has not increased our funding sufficiently to meet the increase in our pending client loads after 2016, the number of cases per client, the growing complexity of our caseload which includes many cases that are more than five years old, and the expanded need for critical casework outside of court by our social workers and parent advocates.

We would be on solid ground if we argued that we needed an increase in our budgets due solely to the enormous needs our clients face right now. They are the poorest people in the City who face the most obstacles during the best of times. During the pandemic, which is affecting our client communities at a much higher rate than other neighborhoods in the City, we are often the only resource they have to help them access basic necessities like food, PPE, and a safe place to sleep. The increasing need of our client base in light of Covid-19 and the related City shut down and the impact of that need on their families and Article 10 cases justifies our funding request at the full level requested in the prior fiscal year. We are mindful of the competing budget priorities facing the city in this challenging moment and are requesting only that our budget be restored.

**B. Active, pending client loads remain high and are expected to increase in FY 22, as ACS files more cases and a backlog of unaddressed matters increases; this makes immediate restoration of our revenue critical so that we can maintain sufficient staff to handle our current clients and new clients as well as address the needs of the families we work with during the continued pandemic.**

Initial case filings in the early stages of COVID-19 were lower, as ACS and court actors all adjusted to the physical shut down of the court and offices, but filings have increased and are back up in many months in some boroughs to pre-pandemic levels. Although intake is inconsistent, the vast majority of cases are family separation cases, which require the same intensive, up front work we had to do prior to the pandemic. Our offices are essentially doing the same number of preliminary hearings to reunify families. At the same time, however, our ability to secure important due process protections for parents remains dramatically limited, even though the family court has gradually expanded its virtual capacity. This is particularly true for those hearings that result in children leaving foster care, which is the most likely predictor of expeditious case resolution. Hundreds of cases have been adjourned several months in the future despite our efforts to see progress on our cases. The court has not had sufficient capacity to hold fact finding hearings which results in a much higher percentage of our cases being at the pre fact finding stage. Very significantly, many clients' matters have no future adjourn date at all. To cite just one data point, 60% of CFR's clients' matters have no next scheduled court date and CFR is now closing cases at half the rate it was prior to the pandemic. This means that even if the family court can reopen or create more virtual capacity, there is already a significant backlog of cases the court must address and that backlog will increase. These limitations and delays only make it more likely that complicated supplemental proceedings like TPRs and custody petitions

will be filed. The work required to reduce the backlog will be time consuming, complicated and staggering. It is essential that we are fully staffed and prepared for that eventuality.

### C. MOCJ needs to at least restore our FY 22 revenue to FY 21 levels because active, pending client load (not annual intake) drives our costs and is a more accurate measure of our workload.

Our workload can not be assessed based on the number of new clients we are assigned (intake). Many of our clients have more than one case and the longer they have a case pending in family court, the more likely they will have more cases filed. Every supplemental matter adds time and workload to the representation. The longer cases pend, the more likely it is that supplemental petitions are filed against our clients. While intake may fluctuate, *it is the pending client load that determines how many attorneys, social work staff and other supports we need to run our practices and serve clients well.* Cases that resolve quickly are the exception. In most cases we work with clients for a long time—on average, more than two years. It is therefore common for us to be litigating two or more matters that involve different discovery, legal standards, and court proceedings for a client simultaneously, sometimes before different jurists. There are no statutory requirements for cases to go to trial within a set timeframe, yet when children are in foster care for 15 out of 22 months, federal law requires, with few exceptions, that a petition to terminate parental rights (TPR) be filed. A petition to terminate parental rights, if successful, has been called the 'civil death penalty,' because it wholesale dissolves the legal relationship—and usually any connection at all—between a parent and child. In cases involving domestic violence, substance use, incarceration, mental illness, children with complex needs, or difficulty obtaining safe and permanent housing, 22 months is a very short time to address the myriad barriers to family reunification, and that is why our interdisciplinary teams are so critical to the representation of parents in child protection proceedings. Supplemental matters, like custody and termination cases, often involve new parties, different attorneys, new motion practice, and new needs for investigation and retaining forensic experts. That is why the current measure of our contracts, new annual intake, is not an adequate measure of our workload. Our work is defined by our current pending caseload and should be measured by that standard.

Our pending client loads, while flattening somewhat, are much higher than they were in FY 16 as a result. Higher pending client numbers means we need more attorneys and administrative staff to handle these cases, as well as more social workers and parent advocates to help parents negotiate service plans, attend meetings and conferences with caseworkers, support and expand visitation, and fulfill the requirements of the service plans required by ACS. To provide quality representation, move cases toward permanency, and ensure children do not languish needlessly in the foster system, our staffing must ensure that each attorney is handling a manageable pending client load. We believe that the target for pending clients should be set at 50, and that

has been recognized by the Commission on Legal Representation as the appropriate standard.[10] In order to meet that pending client target, we would not only need to have the $8.7 million restored, but we would need to add additional funds.

### D. COVID-19 and its harrowing impact on low-income NY families makes it likely that we will see increased ACS filings and court cases filed in FY 22.

The social and economic instability caused by COVID-19 is precisely the type of circumstance that gives rise to the vast majority of calls to the SCR, ACS investigations, case filings, and forced family separations through the foster system. Much of our work to come will be a continuation of our efforts to ensure that families are supported and children are not unnecessarily and traumatically separated from their parents due to poverty or instability. It will, however, be significant and require more resources than ever before in the wake of the catastrophic COVID-19 pandemic.

New York City's family defense providers have met the challenge of an extremely limited Family Court through continued high quality representation of parents during this crisis. We have represented parents in new cases filed in the virtual court, including litigating emergency hearings to prevent foster care placement; worked to conference and resolve as many pending cases as possible; and advocated in agency conferences with ACS and foster care agencies and with Family Court Legal Services regarding visitation, access to services and reunification of families. We created a digital flyer with our contact information translated into several languages that ACS agreed to provide to parents when it summoned them to virtual court. Our social work staff connected parents to virtual services when in-person services were abruptly discontinued, preventing interruption in services that could lead to children entering the foster system or delay their return home. And social work staff continued to advocate at the full array of foster agency and ACS conferences by phone and video, even in person.

ACS and foster agencies have unilaterally and summarily restricted the ability of families to visit in-person, despite court orders from before the pandemic and despite ACS's own guidelines to evaluate each case individually to assess whether in-person visitation can continue safely. Families were left to maintain their bond, even with infants and very young children, virtually over telephone and video chat. For many parents, this has meant that their access to their children has become dependent upon their access to the requisite technology and WiFi. Our attorneys and social workers have had to renegotiate the terms of almost every case where children are separated from their families because of foster agencies' and foster caretakers' inability or refusal to continue in-person visits and their insistence on limiting the amount of contact parents have with their children. In the face of this massive and systemic distancing of families that have already been separated, the court's capacity to hear applications by parents to enforce their rights to spend time in-person with their children or to reunite families with children in foster care has been greatly reduced and remains limited. As a result, our staff have shifted focus to helping our

clients navigate these newly-erected obstacles to remaining connected with their children by negotiating creative solutions with ACS and foster agencies.

Despite these efforts, our clients' access to the court remains drastically curtailed and many cases have been adjourned to a date in the far future. Some have no adjourn date at all. This means that we can not close cases as frequently as we did in the past. To cite one data point, in the last two quarters of 2020, CFR's average intake was 187 cases and average cases closed was 106, meaning **there was a net increase in pending cases of 81 per quarter.** The change in case closing rates was also significant. Now, CFR is closing on average 106 cases per quarter, compared to 224 cases in the same time period of 2019. An increasing backlog, and an inability to close our cases, means that our pending caseload will increase.

At the same time, we believe that ACS will increase the number of cases it files over the next several months as the court reopens. As the vaccine is rolled out, and school and other children's programs open, allegations of maltreatment that often lead to court filings are also likely to increase. This, combined with a backlog, will make it even more important for family defenders to have the revenue needed to staff at prior fiscal year levels.

There is no quantitative or qualitative metric that can capture the cascading impact this pandemic is going to have on New York City's families with ACS involvement. All of these changes have amplified the intensity of separation between parents and children in foster care and, by default, increased the length of stay for every single child in foster care. We fear that once we return to some level of normalcy, there will be an absolute flood of Termination of Parental Rights ("TPR") proceedings as well, meaning that many of our clients will face permanent and irrevocable termination of their families because of the obstacles created by the pandemic. Our continued ability to work around these obstacles and implement creative solutions is more critical than ever.

## II. We ask that the *Home for Good Practice* be fully funded at the level requested in FY 21, $325,000

Many parents in family court face multiple additional legal challenges that arise out of or are related to their child welfare case-all of which undermine their ability to raise their children safely. In recognition of the fact that parents who face a child welfare case also face multiple additional legal challenges, outside of family court, which undermines their ability to raise their children CFR launched *Home For Good*, with City Council support. *Home for Good* is an efficient, one-stop solution providing integrated services and legal advocacy so parents need not go outside CFR for assistance navigating other complicated legal and bureaucratic systems. Until *Home for Good*, our clients had to access attorneys or professionals in other organizations, who typically lacked knowledge of the child welfare case and often unwittingly compromised the family's ability to avoid or shorten foster care. Building on the relationship our teams have with our clients, we can easily identify and efficiently rectify collateral issues and minimize the

extent to which clients have to access critical services elsewhere. Notably, families in both the Bronx and Brooklyn now have access to such holistic assistance. We want to ensure that families in Queens and Manhattan receive the same opportunity for long-term safety and stability.

*Home for Good* consists of 1 civil services attorney supervisor, 1 housing attorney, 1 immigration attorney supervisor, 1 immigration specialist, 1 experienced criminal social worker, 1 client coordinator, 1 parent advocate, 1 experienced social worker, 1 investigator and dedicated paralegal and supervisory support. Parents who are poor deserve the same representation that any parent of means would seek out: one law office to handle all of their legal issues including: Immigration matters, Criminal matters, and Civil Legal Services.

30% of our clients are non-citizens and in FY 2020 our immigration attorney and our immigration specialist have assisted 100 clients with immigration related matters by assessing their eligibility to attain legal status, defending them in deportation proceedings, and assisting them in engaging in culturally competent services. A third of our clients face criminal prosecution for the same events that led them into family court. Our goal for our criminal practice was to defend parents in criminal court and provide social work support to secure services that minimize incarceration. In FY 2020 our criminal defense team represented over 90 clients in criminal court proceedings. Over 30% of our clients are homeless or have housing insecurity. We have built a highly skilled housing team to represent parents in housing court and administrative proceedings to avoid eviction, secure repairs, or access benefits to obtain stable housing and public benefits. In FY 2020, our housing attorney and public benefits specialist together assisted 305 parents in either avoiding eviction or otherwise maintaining safe housing, including securing necessary repairs and obtaining or maintaining public benefits.

Though we were awarded reduced funding in FY21 ($219,000) the demand for our services did not decrease and we served more clients in FY21. We found new ways to assist clients virtually, often helping clients access public benefits for the first time and assisting them in immigration, housing and criminal matters. Once evictions begin again in New York, we expect the demand for housing assistance in particular to grow, and as we outline above, new family court filings will also increase the demand for these holistic, wrap around collateral services.

**III**. **<u>We ask that CFR receive $50,000 in DOVE funding to support our social worker and legal advocacy for survivors of domestic violence in Article 10 proceedings</u>**

DOVE funding will allow CFR to offer enhanced, well-coordinated services to our clients who are survivors or victims of domestic violence, which includes 20% of our clients. We assign a family defense team to every client, and this funding will enable us to maintain the intensive social work support and coordinated legal representation survivors need. Social work staff will continue to do complete assessments to determine the needed services for a family and make

appropriate referrals that address not only the issues of violence, but also the client's cultural background. CFR social work staff will find appropriate referrals for our undocumented clients who need either free or sliding scale services.

CFR staff collaborate with service provider staff to offer ongoing support to the client while they participate. Attorney and social work staff will coordinate their efforts, making sure that ACS and the family court have needed information on our client's progress, to resolve the client's family court case as quickly as possible, hopefully with the client's children home and the family in a safe and stable environment. Whenever necessary, the family defense team will work with other CFR staff to address issues related to immigration, housing or criminal defense issues--importantly, a parent charged by ACS in family court in the Bronx or Brooklyn has access to such coordinated collateral assistance, but only CFR offers that to parents in Queens. Thus, DOVE funding is all the more critical to giving parents an efficient one stop solution to a variety of needs

**IV. We ask that the *Right to Family Advocacy Initiative* be fully funded at the level requested in FY 21.**

Thanks to the support of Speaker Corey Johnson and Councilperson Stephen Levin, the City Council allocated $1.5 million in FY 20 for the four family defense providers ($325,000 for each organization) to provide representation to low-income parents during ACS investigations, as well as at Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) hearings that are necessary to amend an indicated case from the State Central Register for Child Maltreatment ("SCR hearings"). This undertaking, called the *Right to Family Advocacy Initiative*, provides desperately needed due process, legal representation, and advocacy services to low-income individuals and families involved in the Family Regulation system. Our Article 10 contracts with MOCJ do not fund us to provide this critical representation before a court case is filed and without these advocacy services, the low-income Black and Brown parents disproportionately targeted by the Family Regulation system would not have access to counsel before an Article 10 petition is filed. With the funding provided by the City Council in FY 20, the family defense providers collectively represented over 1,160 parents during child welfare investigations and in SCR hearings.

Last February, just before COVD-19 swept through the City and New York came to a stand-still, the Article 10 providers jointly applied to renew the *Right to Family Advocacy Initiative* for fiscal year 2021 at 3 million. The funding request for FY 21 reflected an increase from the prior year of one million to maintain the program and to meet the rising need for the services. This year's funding request is at that same level of FY 21. Because the City needed to address multiple challenges and shortfalls in revenue in FY 21, as the pandemic raged, funding for the initiative was understandably reduced in the current fiscal year to $216,666 per provider. Even with reduced funding, we have served, collectively, 1,140 parents in the first several months of FY 21, providing nearly all our services virtually, including community outreach. The need for

the advocacy funded by this initiative continues and has become even more essential during the pandemic. We expect the demand to increase as our clients come from the communities most in need and most impacted by the compounding physical and financial hardships of the pandemic. Therefore, we are asking for 3 million ($750,000 per provider) so that we can continue to provide these vital services in FY 22.

A. **Low-income parents do not have access to counsel during ACS investigations, resulting in unnecessary traumatic and harmful family separations and case filings.**

Currently, parents with family regulation involvement who cannot afford to hire counsel are not provided assigned attorneys until ACS files an abuse or neglect case against them in Family Court. Before a case is filed in court, however, crucial decisions are made that have grave consequences for how cases proceed, including whether the family will be diverted to prevention programs and services; whether a case will be filed in court; and, most significantly, whether children will be separated from their parents. Without access to counsel during this critically important investigative stage of an Article 10 case, parents are forced to meet with ACS, make critical decisions, and navigate the city's intervention into their family's life on their own. When parents are required to proceed under these circumstances—without knowing their rights or how the investigative and Family Court process works—the result is that too many children are unnecessarily separated from their parents, many unnecessary cases are filed, and invaluable court time is taken away from important hearings and other critical matters impacting families' lives. For all of these reasons, the Commission on Parental Legal Representation established in 2018 by Chief Judge Janet DiFiore recommended that parents be granted access to counsel during these investigations.[11] In addition, the standards of practice for parents' attorneys adopted by the American Bar Association in 2006 recommend that attorneys actively represent parents during an investigation.[12] Because representation at the investigative phase of a case is an effective and much needed bulwark against a multitude of avoidable harms to families occuring within the Family Regulation system, it is crucial that the City fund this type of advocacy.

**B. Low-income parents do not have access to counsel in SCR hearings and are unjustifiably categorically denied employment opportunities.**

Parents are not given access to counsel in SCR hearings that are necessary to amend an indicated case from the State Central Register for child maltreatment (the "SCR"). New York parents who are listed on the SCR are routinely denied employment based on unproven allegations of child abuse and neglect. New York state has one of the most restrictive SCRs in the country and SCR records remain accessible to employers and others for years, restricting parents' ability to work and support their families. The majority of parents listed on the SCR never have cases filed against them in court and never have the allegations against them reviewed by a judge to

determine whether they are supported by evidence and actually warrant drastically limiting a person's employability. In these cases where there is no court filing, parents are never assigned an attorney to inform them of their right to challenge their listing on the SCR which could bar them from employment. Last year New York law was changed and there will be some modifications that could benefit parents, but the law does not go into effect until January of 2022 and there is a new type of rehabilitation hearing that parents will have the opportunity to apply for. It is critical that the City provide low-income parents with access to attorneys to represent them in these hearings and remove unjustifiable and unreasonable barriers to their employment. This is even more urgent as the unemployment rate in New York City remains high. People who challenge their inclusion in the SCR and have their names cleared can get jobs that serve society and financially support their families once they are cleared.

### C. The *Right to Family Advocacy Initiative* avoids unnecessary family separation and court filings.

Through the *Right to Family Advocacy Initiative*, low-income parents in New York City have access to attorneys and social work assistance when they are faced with an ACS investigation or have been denied employment due to having an indicated case on the SCR. Teams of attorneys, social workers, paralegals, and parent advocates are available to advise parents about their rights, their choices, and the consequences of decisions during an ACS investigation. As a result, parents are more meaningfully engaged in the process and ACS is better informed about a family's circumstances. We are able to assist parents in providing helpful information to ACS, identifying their strengths and resources, accessing services and material assistance, and addressing the issues that brought their children to the attention of ACS in the first instance. Our advocates attend conferences at ACS, schools, and medical providers with our clients. This support often results in resolving cases without ACS having to file a petition court.

Throughout the pandemic, each of the providers continued to represent parents during investigations and in SCR proceedings. We continued to conduct intake by phone, text, WhatsApp and video, and adapted our procedures to obtain e-signatures on releases and other documents needed to assist parents. We appeared by video or phone at SCR administrative hearings and ACS conferences to provide advocacy and to prevent court filings. Many critical services like day care and counseling were abruptlydiscontinued during the pandemic and our social work staff helped connect parents to virtual replacement services, and supported them in addressing essential needs, like locating food pantries and PPE. We also assisted clients in applying for public benefits, navigating the challenges of remote schooling, and by providing crisis intervention and support in myriad ways.

Through early advocacy and identification of appropriate services and resources, we avoid unnecessary and traumatic family separations and often keep family court cases from ever being filed against the families we assisted. This essential work has resulted in tremendous fiscal

savings for the City, preserving valuable court resources and time for cases that require court intervention.

**D. The pandemic has already resulted in an increased demand for our assistance and we expect that demand to grow as the City re-opens.**

It is well understood that the novel coronavirus has disproportionately impacted Black and Brown low-income New Yorkers. In 2019, the vast majority of the families prosecuted by ACS were from this same demographic and from low-income communities. Accordingly, the Covid-19 crisis and the cascade of physical and mental health consequences, economic devastation, and social disruption have fallen disproportionately on the families we serve. In addition, parents who benefited from the eviction moratorium but who lost part-time work during the pandemic will now face housing insecurity and homelessness. These are the very conditions that give rise to increased reports to the SCR, lead to ACS involvement and result in unnecessary family separations and court filings that would be avoided if parents had access to counsel and social work advocacy during the investigation. Parents who had critical services interrupted and may be struggling as a result are also more likely to find themselves investigated by ACS. In addition, we expect the 'reopening' of schools, daycares, and other services to lead to an increase in reports to the SCR and ACS investigations. Parents will need representation and assistance navigating ACS investigations, under circumstances where they are already strained by the impact of the pandemic.

In addition to the work we have done, in partnership with other community based providers, to hold "Know Your Rights" presentations in our client's communities and online, in the past year we have also created a Know Your Rights website for parents. The website is designed to provide critical information about ACS investigations and about how to contact us, in English and Spanish. We anticipate that both our community outreach efforts, and the visibility and accessibility that the website provides will result in heightened demand for our services when it is launched in the near future.

Providing parents with legal assistance and social support in order to prevent unnecessary family separation and family court filings should be an urgent goal for the City. Children, who have already suffered interrupted connections with friends and families as a result of the pandemic, should not be further harmed by unnecessary separation from their parents. In addition to preventing unnecessary family separation, early defense is especially critical because the family court, which is already dealing with a backlog of cases, is likely to be further overwhelmed if an increase in investigations leads to more court cases. Funding early defense will ensure that cases that do not need to be filed in court are properly diverted to preventive services. Finally, everyone who suffered economic loss during the pandemic will be looking to re-establish employment and financial security; for parents burdened with an SCR record as a result of ACS involvement, their need to preserve and expand employment will be no less critical. And given

that the majority of parents impacted by ACS are Black and Brown, SCR advocacy is an important measure towards addressing the racial economic disparity that is an embedded consequence of ACS involvement.

Even before the pandemic, we could not meet the need of every parent facing an investigation or needing advocacy with the SCR. Therefore we are asking that the Council provide us with adequate funding to meet this demand that increases economic mobility for parents, saves the City money in reduced foster care and court filings, eases the burden on the city's Family Courts and prevents the short and long term harmful consequences of family separation.

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I am to answer any questions you may have and you can reach me at the contact information provided below. We greatly appreciate this opportunity to provide you with information on the critical importance of maintaining our funding to ensure that parents faced with the loss of their children are provided high quality legal representation and social work and parent advocate services.

Center for Family Representation, Michele Cortese

mcortese@cfrny.org

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[1] New York has long recognized a parent's right to counsel in child protection proceedings. In a pioneering 1972 decision, *Matter of Ella B.*, 30 N.Y.2d 352, the New York Court of Appeals recognized the equal protection and due process right to indigent parents to assigned counsel in child neglect and abuse cases. Three years later, sections 261, 262, and 1120 of the Family Court Act codified a broad parental right to counsel. Additionally, numerous provisions throughout Article 10 of the Family Court Act address implementation of the parental right to counsel in child welfare proceedings.

[2] *See* Commission on Parental Legal Representation, Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore (February 2019), pps. 27-28. *See also* Martin Guggenheim & Susan Jacobs, *A New National Movement in Parent Representation*, 47 CLEARINGHOUSE REV. 44, 45 (2013), available at http://www.cfrny.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/A-New-National-Movement-in-Parent-Representation-Clearinghouse-Review.pdf.

[3] *Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore*, pg. 26.

[4] Center for New York City Affairs, The New School, *Watching the Numbers: A Six-Year Statistical Survey Monitoring New York City's Child Welfare System* (November 2016), available at

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53ee4f0be4b015b9c3690d84/t/5849a22f725e254385d753eb/1481220657883/FINAL_Watching+the+Numbers_2016.pdf.

[5] *See* study at *https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S019074091930088X; see also Providing Parents Multidisciplinary Legal Representation Significantly Reduces Children's Time in Foster Care,* by Martin Guggenheim & Susan Jacobs, June 4, 2019.

[6] *See, e.g., Matter of Jamie J.*, 30 N.Y.3d 275, 280 n.1 (2017).

[7] *See* Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Brain Development, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVwFkcOZHJw&feature=youtu.be.

[8] *See, e.g.*, Jayesh M. Rathod, *The Transformative Potential of Attorney Bilingualism*, 46 U. Michigan J. Law Reform 863-920 (2013).

[9] Data are from the New York State Unified Court System, comparing 1,140 at the end of 2016 (see the second row, penultimate column of the chart available here: http://www.nycourts.gov/publications/pdfs/Family-Court-statistics2016.pdf) with 1,584 at the end of 2017 (see the second row, penultimate column of the chart available here: http://www.nycourts.gov/publications/pdfs/Family-Court-statistics2017.pdf).

[10] Commission on Parental Legal Representation, Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore, February 2019. *See also* Indigent Legal Services, Standards for Determining Financial Eligibility for Assigned Counsel February 16, 2021, pg 31 ("*counsel shall also be provided for parents in child welfare proceedings during a child protective agency investigation and sufficiently in advance of their first court appearance..*"); written testimony of American Bar Association, Government Affairs Office, *e.g.* ABA, Indicators of Success for Parental Representation, at ii-iii (describing results of evaluation of a Texas pilot project setting a cap of 50 clients and finding that after six months, "the model had already improved the quality of representation for parents," and resulted in reduced continuances and delays).*See also* ILS Model Upstate Parental Representation Office Request for Proposals ("Given the unique complexities involved in state intervention cases, caseload limits are essential to permit attorneys to comply with their ethical responsibilities. This RFP therefore contemplates an office average of no more than 50 clients per attorney at any given time."), available at https://www.ils.ny.gov/files/Parent%20Representation/RFP-Upstate%20Model%20Paren-tal%20Representation%20Office%20Grant%20032017.pdf.

[11] Commission on Parental Legal Representation, Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore, February 2019.

[12] *See* American Bar Association, Standards of Practice for Attorneys Representing Parents in Abuse and Neglect Cases 10 (2006), available at https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child_law/aba-parent-rep-stds.pdf

[13] Total clients represented includes all clients for whom Early Defense & SCR advocacy began between July 1, 2019 - April 30, 2019 and is now concluded. It does not include cases that began during this time period, but which are still pending.

[14] Villarosa, Linda (April 29, 2020) " A Terrible Price: The Deadly Racial Disparities of Covid-19 in America"; New York Times; Mays, Jeffrey C. Andy Newman. (2020 April 8). "Virus is Twice as Deadly for Black and Latino People Than Whites in N.Y.C" New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/08/nyregion/coronavirus-race-deaths.html

[15] Grench, Eileen. (2020 April 28). "Parents Expecting Ipads Deliveries Got Knock on Door from Child Welfare Workers". The City. https://thecity.nyc/2020/04/some-parents-awaiting-ipads-got-visit-from-child-welfare.html?utm_campaign=mailchimp&utm_source=daily&utm_medium=newsletter

**Testimony for the New York City Council Committee on Finance**

*May 25th, 2021*

My name is Ashley Newenle, I use (they/them) pronouns and I am a part of the Young Women's Advisory Council at Girls for Gender Equity. The NYPD is rooted in racist and bigoted ideologies that makes its way into the school system under the false notion of "safety". This is why we need to divest in policing in schools and invest in practices that have proven to be effective .

It is important to have police free schools because students don't need to feel unsafe in a space that preaches safety. School is a place that is supposed to be open to testing the waters and learning to be more responsible and respectful individuals. For decades you all put police officers in schools and you know it doesn't work, and yet you continue to fund them... why? Let it be anything else and if it doesn't work on the first try you cut it without hesitation. When you put police in school, you are not allowing them the chance to make the mistake and learn from it. You are automatically holding them accountable for something they did not even think to do. Police-free schools does not mean simply retraining Police officers to "be mindful" of their impact on the students. This means to completely remove them from the space and replace them with people who are better equipped to handle students who are having a hard time. **For decades you all put police officers in schools and you know it doesn't work, and yet you continue to fund them...why? Had it been anything else that didn't work on the first try you cut it without hesitation.**

**Again, when you put police in school, you are not allowing students the chance to make mistakes and learn from them.** As an alternative to this, we should work to put forth more restorative practices that will allow them the space to think through their mistakes. You are automatically holding students accountable for something they did not even think to do. The first step to liberation is feeling understood and valid in what you are experiencing. If there are no social workers that look like you or represent your experiences, how can healing happen? How are students supposed to learn to be better if they constantly have to explain and emotionally support the person in what it is they're going through every time they want to start unpacking their trauma? Young people are not inherently bad. There is no such thing as a bad child or a bad teen, there are only young people who are learning to navigate their ever changing life by pushing the boundaries.

**New York City Council Committee on Finance**
**Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget Hearing**
**Tuesday, May 25th, 2021**
**Testimony submitted by: The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)**

Thank you to Chair Dromm and the members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to present testimony on the Executive Budget. My name is Ramon Peguero and I am the President & CEO 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.

During the pandemic, community-based organizations, like CHCF, that had well established relationships in schools and communities were able to rapidly adjust services to not only supplement the difficult transitions in learning, but to respond to the holistic and intersectional crises and traumas caused by the pandemic. We have been able to maintain continual, culturally and linguistically responsive communications with the families, students, school leaders and child care providers that we serve throughout these difficult times and continue to uplift their experiences and needs as the city is making significant decisions about how to fund our city's recovery from COVID-19.

Coming out of 2020, we recognize that the mayor and other city leaders were faced with a difficult budget. While many advocates continued to underscore the multitude of needs, we were met with the reality of non-existent federal relief funding to the states and localities, with simultaneous drops in tax revenues. We, alongside state and city leaders and organizations, called upon and advocated for the federal government to send the necessary relief, and equally celebrated the American Rescue Plan that went through in March. Now, with tremendous amounts of relief pouring in, the City has an opportunity to thoughtfully invest in building back better systems to address the longstanding inequities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Our previous testimonies to the City Council during the preliminary budget cycle underscored the challenges faced by families and students in navigating the shift from in-person learning to remote learning with inadequate technology and connectivity, and the disproportionate impact on students in temporary housing; gaps in supports for students with special learning needs; the child care crisis being faced by families who were navigating work schedules while children were in fully remote learning and when hybrid models were introduced; and the vast mental health concerns being faced by students and their families as they were coping with the physical, financial, and social traumas of COVID-19. We additionally spoke of the specific

challenges faced by independent/community-based child care providers whose small businesses were overwhelmingly unable to access the SBA relief and other forms of child care sector relief, forcing many to close their doors and fueling further growth of child care deserts as our workforce picks back up. We continue to stress that these are all top issues to address with intention and with an eye on long term sustainability and growth, beyond the life of these federal dollars. Now is the time to invest in programs and models that we know will work in response to the immediate crises, and that will ultimately drive towards a better, more equitable system for all children and families.

Regarding Pre-K to 12 education, we echo many in emphasizing holistic, wrap around services that address the unique academic and mental health needs of our children and families. As a member of the Coalition for Community Schools Excellence, we were excited to hear the Mayor and DOE's announcement on the expansion of the Community Schools model immediately into communities that were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and beyond to reach 406 schools by 2025. We agree that this model encompasses essential elements around academic supports, mental health services, and extended learning time opportunities that are being focused on in response the past academic year and a half, and that have been proven effective.[1] We believe that it is crucial for the city to appropriately safeguard fidelity to the community school model, baselining funding of existing and new schools ($450K per school), so that there aren't concerns about cuts from year to year, which has a destabilizing effect on staffing and delivery of services for the school, the partnering CBO, and the students and families.

Beyond the extended learning time programming that is interwoven into the community school model, access to culturally and linguistically responsive out of school time programming had a significant impact on families navigating the academic challenges of the past two school years. We continue to hear from our parents that having the additional support through afterschool minimized the negative impacts of the pandemic on their child's learning and mental health. Our programs were able to work closely with our school leaders and day-school teachers to ensure that we were uplifting student academic growth throughout remote and hybrid learning. Further, after school programs were able to continue offering virtual and in-person activities that allowed students to explore their interests and remain engaged and excited about learning. We were additionally able to extend the reach of our virtual activities to family members and others in the school, even those not enrolled in program, with an intentional focus on combating the mental health struggles brought on by the fear and isolation of the

[1] Johnston, W.R., Engberg, J., Opper, I.M., Sontag-Padilla, L., & Xenakis, L. (2020). Illustrating the Promise of Community Schools: An Assessment of the Impact of the New York City Community Schools Initiative. Rand Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3245.html

pandemic. Investing in CBOs who use culturally and linguistically responsive programming to expand the reach out out-of-school-time programs (COMPASS, SONYC, Beacon, WLG, etc.), especially in communities most impacted by the pandemic (health wise, financially, etc.), would have a tremendous impact on stabilizing and further strengthening our communities, families, and students.

CHCF is excited about the new Summer Rising model that blends academic supports and summer camp elements as a holistic response to the past two academic years. Knowing the effects of summer learning loss, even before the pandemic, and the gaps in access to free/affordable summer programming across the city, this model has the potential to holistically serve our families and students, not only as we recover from the pandemic and prepare for the return to in-person learning but going forward as the new summer learning model. We hope that the budget will invest in the long-term sustainability and growth of Summer Rising, building out access within school communities reflective of demand and with the CBOs who have established relationships and rapport with families and students in those schools, where possible, to ensure that programming is easily accessible and responsive to individual family and student needs.

As we move towards the next academic year, we believe there should be an intentional focus on supports for specific student subgroups who were not consistently receiving the necessary supports over the past two school years. Multilingual Learners (MLLS) and families with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) faced additional barriers in remaining connected to schools and accessing resources and supports to ensure academic growth during the pandemic. We appreciate that the DOE has their attention on hiring up bilingual educators, counselors and social workers, and we agree that hiring representative staff will have a tremendous impact on supporting MLLs. As the city is investing in the expansion of counselors and social workers, there should be a specific focus on diversifying the new hires in line with this focus.[2] In addition to building out responsive supports for day-school, we understand that the city will also automatically enroll MLLs in Summer Rising in order to address academic needs prior to the start of the new school year. Beyond connection to Summer Rising, CHCF hopes that the DOE will continue to fund ongoing access to one-on-one or small group supplemental supports, as well as prioritize access to after school programming, to continue academic supports as well as access to programs that are culturally responsive and sustaining, cultivate exploration and excitement in learning, and invest in individual interests and skills. Coming out of the pandemic, we really stress that the city needs to be cautious in how they work with student subgroups who did not have access to the necessary supports throughout the pandemic, actively pushing against any use of a deficit-lens, which can have devastating effects on our

[2] See Our Truth (2017) The Education Trust – New York. https://seeourtruth-ny.edtrust.org

students. We continue to stress that investments in CBOs who have established rapport and relationships in non-English speaking and immigrant communities would further build out one-on-one and wrap around supports offered to MLL students and LEP families. Intentionally partnering with CBOs, especially smaller CBOs outside of the domain of those who the DOE might typically partner with or contract, could strengthen not only the academic and mental health supports, but the levels of family and community engagement as we transition back to in-person learning. We continue to join our partners in the New York Immigration Coalition Education Collaborative in calling on full funding and implementation of the proposed DOE Communications Plan for Immigrants.[3]

CHCF underscores the significant barriers faced by families in shelters throughout the pandemic, despite the dedicated work of educators, DOE staff, and the DOE STH team. In light of the gaps in access to necessary resources and the alarming drop in attendance rates for students in shelters[4], the city should allocate some of the federal relief dollars to hiring 150 shelter-based Students in Temporary Housing Community Coordinators. We agree with our partners at Advocates for Children that this investment is critical in supporting students in temporary housing to reconnect with school, participate in Summer Rising, and access additional supplemental programming offered by the DOE in the coming years.

CHCF also recognizes the gap in supports and services for students with special needs. Specifically, long standing gaps in access to and equitable funding for preschool special education classes and educators has created significant disparities in access to these important supports and services. We join our partners at Advocates for Children in recommending that the FY 22 budget include $85M to address the preschool special education class shortage and provider salary parity to teachers of preschool special education classes at CBOs, as recommended in the City Council's response to the preliminary budget. While there was some new funding proposed in the Executive Budget for special education supports and initiatives, there is no new funding to address the seat shortage and pay disparities for teachers in CBOs, which has left children without the classes and supports that they need.

The New York City child care sector faced extraordinary challenges throughout the pandemic, which has had devastating effects on a predominantly women and BIPOC workforce and small business community. Child care has always been a core pillar in the stability of NYC's economy and workforce. Even before the pandemic, with inadequate resource funding and market rates

[3] Proposed DOE Communications Plan for Immigrants (2020) New York Immigration Coalition Education Collaborative. https://drive.google.com/file/d/10xNJyhHxSJc6hHjYqnJoSrLTv1vCqcyg/view

[4] Disparities in Attendance During COVID-19 (2021). Advocates for Children. https://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/policy_brief_attendance_disparities_covid_41421.pdf?pt=1

that didn't reflect the true cost of business, there had been rapidly growing child care deserts. During the pandemic, while some working parents began working from home and temporarily did not require child care, other members of the workforce – especially essential workers – still needed access to child care. With drops in enrollment, many child care businesses were not making enough to sustain their businesses. For the exceptionally small child care businesses, accessing the small business relief was riddled with language barriers and lacking technical assistance to ensure a health application and most were unable to receive this relief.

While we continue to work with the state on rapidly moving the child care stabilization funds, NYC needs to take an active role in equitably funding and stabilizing this sector that they cannot do without. This starts with the portions of the sector that the DOE oversees – EarlyLearn Family Child Care Networks and Birth to Five CBO providers. There needs to be adequate funding to guarantee FCCN contracts up to 68% of enrollment, with incremental increase guarantees based on enrollment (in line with Birth to Five CBO contracts). While Networks, FCC providers, and CBO centers are trying to stabilize and build up enrollment, the city cannot deprive them of the base funding necessary to maintain high quality programming and supports. Further the DOE needs to build out rates for providers of 3K services that are reflective of the added quality expectations and program requirements. As an immediate stopgap to the financial crisis that many providers are finding themselves in, the city should fund hazard pay for the providers who have remained open and offering care, even though there were lacking health and safety guidance and protocols that would ensure their wellbeing.

Especially for independent providers outside of the DOE domain, it is critical that the city begin actively addressing their needs as small businesses who support all other businesses throughout the city. Much like the federal government had to ear mark SBA PPP relief for truly small business in the successive rounds of those loans (even this didn't expand reach to child care providers), the city must intentionally drive relief and technical assistance to this exceptionally vulnerable, yet critically essential business community. Going forward, there should be specific attention set aside in small business and workforce development discussion spaces to align with other systems that oversee child care and intentionally act in support of this predominantly women and BIPOC led small business community.

We, again, thank you for this opportunity to present testimony. If there are any questions about what is presented in this or any of our previous testimonies on the city budget, please reach out to Danielle Demeuse, Director of Policy for the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF) at ddemeuse@chcfinc.org or 212-206-1090, ext. 359.

Dear City Council,

On behalf of Chen Dance Center located in the heart of Chinatown, NY, we would like to share how NYC funding impacts our programming and constituents. Comprised of a professional dance company, a school providing opportunities to train and perform in dance and music, and a black-box theater that presents dance and Asian American artists, Chen Dance Center has been able to reach audiences of all ages. Our programs have been recognized by the NEA, NYSCA, and the NYC Dept of Cultural Affairs, by the dance field and Asian community.

Every year, Chen Dance Center hosts field trips for schools citywide to live performances based on Chinese American history through the lens of dance. Classrooms then return for follow-up workshops in dance and calligraphy.

Our educational programs not only introduce culture and history, but provide students the tools to understand and appreciate world cultures. In this way, students can view Asians not as the 'alien-other', but as their neighbors, friends and colleagues.

For Chinatown families and children, Chen Dance Center was 'their theater'. Here, they could see traditional and contemporary dance, films, photographic exhibits, music concerts, staged readings. Families would proudly gather a few times a year to watch student recitals and celebrate their child's progress in the arts.

Funding also enabled Chen Dance Center to provide years of free After-School dance programs for an immigrant community that needed a consistent pipeline in the arts for their children's development. We employ the finest performing and teaching artists, who have professional careers and engagements, but also a love for sharing their work with our constituents. Without adequate funding, we would not be able to retain these wonderful artists.

Asians, represent 15% of NYC population, yet receive less than 15% of city funding. Asian communities have especially been hard-hit because of xenophobia leading to greater loss of business. The arts are both essential and transformative on a human and economic level. For NYC to recover fully, the arts must come roaring back.

Thank you,



Associate Director
Chen Dance Center

**Cultural Institutions Group**
**Testimony to the New York City Council**
**Executive Budget Hearing**
**Tuesday, May 25, 2021**
**Taryn Sacramone, Executive Director – Queens Theatre**
**Chair, Cultural Institutions Group**

## Cultural Recovery for New York City's Recovery - FY22 Request

Good afternoon, Speaker Johnson, Chairman Dromm and members of the City Council. I am Taryn Sacramone, Executive Director for Queens Theater and Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG). I am here today to provide testimony on behalf of the members of the CIG. The Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) is one of America's greatest public- private partnerships. It is a diverse coalition of 34 nonprofit museums, performing arts centers, historical societies, zoos, and botanical gardens across all five boroughs with a shared responsibility and commitment to serve the people of New York.

Let me begin by stating how grateful we are for the Council's vital support for culture and the arts throughout the years, and most especially in this past year.

As we have continually demonstrated to the city, regardless of where we were in the COVID-19 crisis, *Culture Never Closed*. Despite the staggering losses where the CIG collectively lost $410M in earned income, we worked to advance our missions and serve New Yorkers, even while many of our doors remained closed and/or restricted in capacity. Collectively, the CIGs ensured that New Yorkers were able to continue to access quality programming online even if isolated in their homes. In total, these offerings reached nearly 10 million individuals - many of them seniors, schoolchildren, or members of other communities particularly hard hit by the pandemic and ensuing isolation. Educational programming transitioned from onsite to online for free and at low-cost to support teachers, students, and their families. While those who were able to reopen like our gardens and zoos became sanctuaries for countless families and individuals.

The CIG's response to the pandemic demonstrated its historical commitment as a civic partner: CIG members were able to transform spaces and resources to accommodate food distribution, COVID testing, blood drives, polling sites, Census outreach sites, and most recently – Covid vaccine sites. Today any tourist or New Yorker can visit AMNH, Bronx Zoo, New York Aquarium, The Brooklyn Children's Museum, Brooklyn Botanic Garden and Brooklyn Museum to receive their vaccination. CIGs are also offering incentives to get vaccinated, with free tickets to visit at: New York Botanical Garden, Brooklyn Botanical Garden, Bronx Zoo, The Public Theater, Lincoln Center for Performing Arts, and New York Aquarium.

CIGs yield a monumental return on investment for all New Yorkers. Museums, zoos, theaters, and other cultural organizations are not only beneficial to the city, New Yorkers, and countless visitors but also play an important economic role in the financial well-being of New York.

With your support, the CIG will have a major role in galvanizing the full recovery of the NYC economy, as it did in 2008 and after 9/11. Pre-pandemic, the CIG's collective budgets were $1.5B a year and we employ 15,700 people, including 5,800 union workers. Our employees live in every district in this City; the dollars we spend, and the dollars that our visitors and patrons spend, support local businesses throughout all five boroughs.

Investments are critical not only for New York to re-emerge as the cultural and financial capital of the world, but for the cultural community to lead the way in reflecting and creating a more equitable New York City. Individually and collectively, CIG members have advanced the goals of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access, executing Board-approved IDEA plans and working together for greater impact with a focus on workforce development.

Through its networks, CIG leverages its significant reach to equitably advance the strength and growth of the larger cultural sector. Last year, we were honored to welcome our colleague institution Weeksville Heritage Center as the newest member of the CIG, following incredible efforts of the Brooklyn City Council members and a broad coalition of cultural organizations. Unfortunately, there currently is no formal process for a cultural organization to be added to the Cultural Institutions Group. We would like to work with the Council and Administration to establish a transparent process to ensure that the CIG reflect the broad diversity of New York City.

As Chair of the CIG, I join my colleagues across the cultural sector, and respectfully ask your support of the Cultural Plan for Recovery (CPR) and add $70M to the cultural budget in FY22. Included within this ask is a request that the Council restore the $20.2M for culture that was added in FY21, with an addition of $9.8M for a total request of $30M, equally split between the CIGs and Program Groups, restore all Council cultural initiatives to FY20 levels, and baseline the Coalition of Theatres of Color.

We believe this ask supports all of culture, which is critical to the rebuilding of our city. There is no reopening without recovery, and no recovery without investment. The health and strength of the cultural sector – foundational to the health and strength of New York City – calls for equity to be structurally incorporated, as outlined in the Cultural Plan for Recovery.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. We look forward to our continued partnership with this great city and value your leadership through this crisis.

**Executive budget hearing for the Department for the Aging**
**Aging Committee**
**May 25, 2021**

**Testimony submitted by:** **Rachel Sherrow**
**Associate Executive Director**
**Citymeals on Wheels**
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**My name is Rachel Sherrow, and I am the Associate Executive Director at Citymeals on Wheels. I would like to begin by thanking the Council for their support of older adult services and for Citymeals on Wheels, which helped deliver over 3 million meals to 20,000 homebound elderly as well as 25,000 formerly congregate and newly homebound citywide this year due to COVID-19, an increase of nearly 50%.**

**I also want to thank the Aging committee, and especially Councilmember Margaret Chin for constantly leading the way in the advocacy and for the dignity of older adults and for the support of senior services which are historically underfunded despite the increasing population.**

**As you know, Citymeals on Wheels is a not-for-profit agency working in partnership with the aging services provider network of New York**

**City and the Department for the Aging. The Department funds the meals that homebound elderly receive Mondays through Fridays, and Citymeals on Wheels privately fundraises in order to fund the same network to deliver weekend, holiday and most especially right now, emergency shelf stable meals. On the 150 days plus throughout the year, the city does not provide a meal, Citymeals steps in to prevent our aging neighbors from being without food or human company.** ***In fact, Citymeals, as an added benefit generates revenue for New York City through the federal government's cash in lieu of commodities program which reimburses DFTA approximately 67 cents for every meal funded by Citymeals. All of this money goes toward the city-funded weekday meals program, bringing in over $1.4 million last fiscal year and an additional 180,000 home delivered meals for those who need it.***

**This pandemic has devastated our population disproportionately both regarding their health and in terms of social isolation. Hunger and loneliness were both issues before the current crisis and will continue after. Citymeals appreciates that this fact has been highlighted and hopes more support will be given to combat food insecurity among the older adult population in New York City.**

**There is substantial evidence that better access to food and more nutritious meals, is an effective way to cut medical costs and improve overall health, *especially* for older adults, therefore proving**

**that meals on wheels is an incredibly essential program and Citymeals a vital lifeline to those unable to shop or cook for themselves. This was once again evident during the current circumstances as is the need for supplemental food, additional to the daily deliveries compounded by the fact that there is no real sense of when senior centers will re-open, or when most will be vaccinated.**

**Older adults are the fastest growing demographic and will surpass those under 18 in less than twenty years. In addition, 1 in 7 older New Yorkers lives in poverty. Living longer, and on fixed incomes means more struggle over access to food for this vulnerable group. The daily deliveries are crucial for the survival of many of these most vulnerable citizens.**

**Unfortunately, it is more difficult and often an impossible task, most especially now, for homebound elderly to access supplemental food. 40% of our meal recipients are unable to leave their homes, and many do not have support to help them, so under normal circumstances, they are unable to walk to pantries, or wait in line and carry the bags home.**

**Thus, home delivered meals are integral to their survival. Ensuring that our meal recipients have food throughout the week is what the partnership between Citymeals and the meals on wheels provider**

network does. Without Citymeals, tens of thousands of (currently 20,000) homebound older adults would no longer receive meals on weekends, holidays or in times of emergency. And now when the meals on wheels rolls have increased by over 20%, it is imperative for those in need to receive extra, supplemental food in addition to their daily meals because getting other means of nutrition is less possible now for most of our recipients. We need to continue to promise that Citymeals will be able to procure, prepare and deliver emergency supplemental meals to those in need before, during and after crises, personal, or city-wide. We know not only are in-home services like Meals on Wheels a cheaper alternative to institutionalization but allows for more dignity and what most older adults prefer, most especially because of the current devastation of life within nursing homes by the coronavirus.

We have always known how critical our services and staff are, but not more so in the current environment as deliverers are essential workers, ensuring their recipients are not without food and a friendly face, risking their own lives to maintain a lifeline for our elderly neighbors. Therefore, Citymeals is requesting $500,000 dollars from NYC Council for FY 22, which will help us continue the necessary and vital work we have been doing for nearly forty years and never more so than over the past year.

**Citymeals values the support of our partners in city government to help us reach all our recipients consistently and without a disruption in service. This kind of partnership is even more crucial in times of uncertainty or when facing potential crises like the COVID-19.**

**Through our Bronx Emergency Meal Distribution Center, Citymeals, has proven it has the capacity to pre-supply both clients and aging service providers like senior centers, NORC's and case management agencies, with shelf stable food in the event of an emergency closure of centers or a suspension in the delivery of services. Thus far, in the current pandemic, we have delivered nearly 1 million shelf stable meals to over 50,000 older adults, including those normally receiving meals on wheels, as well as to those now considered homebound because they are being asked to stay home and protect themselves. This is in addition to the nearly 3 million weekend and holiday meals we continued to deliver uninterrupted.**

**Citymeals on Wheels together with local community-based organizations, the Department for the Aging, and The New York City Council, are working tirelessly to keep older adults, food secure and living safely in their own communities. We know that at least 20,000 elderly New Yorkers who receive meals on wheels, are being fed 365 days a year plus some extra. We hope you, our partner in city government, will help us to continue to advocate on behalf of those**

**who are often forgotten and marginalized and continue to support aging services and Citymeals on Wheels.**

**As we celebrate our 40th year, we thank you again for consistently working with us and I hope we can count on all your support once again this year. Be safe and stay healthy!**

CityParks FOUNDATION

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**City Parks Foundation Testimony**
**FY22 Budget Hearing - Tuesday, May 25, 2021**

At City Parks Foundation, we lead free sports, arts, environmental education, and community building programs - including Partnerships for Parks, a joint program with NYC Parks. Our programs encourage New Yorkers to use and care for our neighborhood parks and green spaces.

More than ever before, New Yorkers have come to rely on parks, the most fundamentally democratic and accessible of public resources. Parks and open spaces are critical to our city's recovery – offering fresh air, recreation, creativity - and a crucial part of New York's equitable economic recovery and environmental resilience.

Parks saw an unprecedented number of visitors last summer and fall, which, combined with FY21's drastic budget cuts of 14%, totaling at $84M, meant that the Parks Department was operating with 1,700 fewer maintenance and operations seasonal staff and led to garbage piling up in parks across the city. The loss of seasonal staff, PEP officers, and gardeners, along with a hiring freeze, has been devastating for parks workers trying to cover 14% of NYC land - and led to the worst conditions in parks since the agency started tracking maintenance in 2004.

Over the last year, the Parks Department has been relying on volunteers as 'green responders' to help with litter removal, planting, and caring for parks. Through 2020, Partnerships for Parks supported an astounding 585 service projects engaging more than 7,000 volunteers - quickly mobilized because of the existing network of nearly 500 stewardship groups in all 51 Council districts that Partnerships for Parks has cultivated for many years. However, the city's budget cuts are having a detrimental impact on this effort - we've lost 15% of our outreach positions, making it very difficult to serve all communities equitably. The Council's visionary Parks Equity Initiative is integral to this network by funding training, micro-grants, volunteer supplies, and group development activities to sustain groups into the future.

At the same time, NYC cannot replace parks workers with volunteers – NYC needs a fully funded and fully staffed Parks Department. We stand as a proud member of the Play Fair Coalition and call on the city to recognize parks as critical infrastructure by allocating 1% or more of the city's budget for parks. NYC Parks is chronically underfunded and understaffed: there are not nearly enough City Park Workers, Gardeners, Urban Park Rangers, or PEP officers. The proposed budget does not return to pre-pandemic levels and it is critical to allocate at least 1% to parks - reaching adequate staffing levels, fully funding the Parks Equity Initiative, and supporting basic maintenance like tree pruning/sidewalk repair/tree stump removal/invasive species control.

As we move into this summer, we're excited to restart SummerStage and free cultural performances, expand sports and environmental educational programs, and support volunteerism this summer as New Yorkers flock to parks. We look forward to working with the Administration to make this possible.

We are grateful to the NYC Council for its continued support and NYC Parks for its long-standing partnership. We look forward to continuing to work together.

Class Size Matters
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www.classsizematters.org

# Testimony before the City Council Finance and Education Committees on the Education budget for FY 2021

May 25, 2021

Thank you Chair Dromm, for holding these important hearings today and for your leadership in advocating for $250 million to be spent on lowering class size next year. My name is Leonie Haimson and I am Executive Director of Class Size Matters. NYC children have needed smaller classes for more than a generation, but they will need them more next year than ever before, and now we have the resources to pay for this it is the perfect opportunity to do so.

In 2003, in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) lawsuit, NY's highest court determined that NYC public school class sizes were too large to provide students with their constitutional right to a sound basic education. The Appellate Court wrote the following: ***"[T]ens of thousands of students are placed in overcrowded classrooms …. The number of children in these straits is large enough to represent a systemic failure. "***[1]

Yet class sizes have increased since that decision was made, particularly in the early grades. Last year, more than one third of all NYC public school students were crammed into classes of thirty or more.

Reducing class size has proven to be through research to be one of the best ways to improve student learning, lower teacher attrition rates, and narrow achievement and opportunity gaps between students of different racial, gender, and economic groups. Smaller classes have been also shown to lead to better grades and test scores, stronger student engagement, fewer disciplinary referrals, and higher graduation and college-going rates, especially for students who need help the most;

Last Saturday, we held a Parent Action Conference, co-sponsored with NYC Kids PAC and Teens Take Charge, focused on how the additional funds should be spent. We also had an online survey asking respondents to rank their priorities among 14 choices. The overwhelming consensus was that class size reduction was the top need for our children, especially now.[2] Smaller classes have also been the top priority of NYC public school parents with children in grades Kindergarten through 12th when asked what

[1] Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc., et al. v. State of New York, et al., 100 N.Y.2d 893, 911-12 (2003) ("CFE II") at: https://www.law.cornell.edu/nyctap/I03_0084.htm

[2] A summary of the survey and conference results are posted here: https://classsizematters.org/results-from-parent-action-conference-2021-how-do-parents-educators-students-want-8b-in-additional-funds-to-be-spent/

change they would most like to see in their children's school since the Department of Education began to administer parent surveys in 2007.

Since our public schools are finally due to receive more than $530 million in additional state Foundation Aid next year, rising to $1.3 billion annually over the next three years, as a direct result of the decision in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) case, it is only right that some of these funds should be specifically allocated for hiring additional teachers to lower class size, and to finally move towards a situation where all NYC children will be provided with their right to a sound basic education.

In addition, students will especially need smaller classes more given the disengagement, disconnection and even despair that many of them have suffered due to Covid and a year and half of remote or blended learning. Only making a close personal connection with their teachers that can happen with smaller classes can children re-engage with the joy of learning.

There are also health and safety reasons why class sizes should be reduced next year. While the Mayor said yesterday that there will be no remote option and Deputy Chancellor Karen Goldmark testified that only ten percent of schools would not be able to provide social distancing of three feet by student. Meanwhile, we estimated that over half of NYC students would not be able to fit into a standard size classroom of 500-750 square feet with three feet of social distancing next year.

Many organizations and community groups have passed resolutions of support for the City Council proposal to spend $250 million for smaller classes next year, including the Chancellors Parent Advisory Council, that represents all the PTAs in the city, and the Education Council Consortium, that represents the Citywide and District Education Councils, as well as many Community Boards and CECs. [3]

It appears that the administration instead wants to use the additional state Foundation funds to fully fund Fair Student Funding. This formula is designed to give principals total flexibility to use resources in any way they choose, which contradicts the state Contracts for Excellence (C4E) law, which requires these funds to be allocated towards five specific areas, including class size reduction, increased student time on task, teacher and principal quality initiatives, middle school and high school restructuring, full-day prekindergarten and kindergarten, and/or model programs for students with limited English proficiency.[4] The C4E law also requires that these funds be used to supplement rather than supplant city funding for these purposes.

Moreover, there is a bill in Albany, S. 6296 and A.7447, introduced by Sen. Robert Jackson and Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon, which would restart the clock on requiring NYC to develop a new five-year class size reduction plan, as was required by the original Contracts for Excellence law that the city never complied with. [5] This bill has growing support from elected officials of all political persuasions, and

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[3] See the list at: https://classsizematters.org/resolution-for-mayor-and-doe-to-invest-in-class-size-reduction-starting-in-fall-2021/

[4] https://govt.westlaw.com/nycrr/Document/I36530535c22211ddb29d8bee567fca9f?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=(sc.Default)

[5] https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/a7447 and https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/s6296

the Council proposal would be critical to provide $250 million for the purpose of providing funds for the first year of this plan.

If the Council succeeds in ensuring that this $250 million is adopted in the final city budget, I agree with Mark Cannizzaro, the President of the Council on School Administrators and Supervisors, who testified that the class size reduction program should be structured as a separate categorical funding stream distinct from Fair Student Funding.

First, the FSF formula is designed to incentivize principals to overcrowd their schools and classrooms, since it is linked to how many students are enrolled in the school. If the funds are simply injected into school budgets through FSF, there will be no transparency or accountability with these funds.

We will never see how many additional teachers were hired as a result, how many additional classes were formed and what were the results in terms of smaller classes. ***There must be specific terms and conditions to require specific reporting at the school and classroom level on the use of this funding, showing how many extra teachers and classrooms were created, with what reductions in class size.*** This data could be released in conjunction with the DOE November 15 class size reports.

In the past, when NYC was provided with categorical state funds that were targeted towards hiring teachers to lower class size, audits from the state and city comptrollers revealed that reductions in class size were caused primarily or partly by enrollment decline, rather than the DOE spending these funds as they were intended, to create additional teaching positions in particular schools to create smaller classes. Instead, the city often used these funds to cut back on its own spending on teacher positions at the same time.[6] If there is not a separate budget allocation for smaller classes, these funds will slip into the maw of the huge DOE budget and we will never see significantly smaller classes, that are so necessary for our children to succeed.

While some schools have the space to lower class size right now, in other schools, space could be created by moving PreK classes currently in elementary schools to city-run PreK centers and Community-Based organizations, which have thousands of empty seats. More space could also be acquired right away if NYC DOE leased or bought the buildings of 17 parochial schools that recently closed.

In the long run, the capital plan for school construction should also be expanded with use of additional funds from the federal infrastructure program, to ensure that student in all parts of the city gain the benefits of smaller classes that they need and deserve.

Thank you for time and for your commitment to begin to provide NYC children with their right to a quality and equitable education, which cannot occur without lowering class size next year.

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[6] See NY State Comptroller, *New York City Department Of Education Administration Of The Early Grade Class Size Reduction Program 2005-N-3*, 2005 at: https://web.osc.state.ny.us/audits/allaudits/093006/05n3.pdf and NYC Comptroller, *Audit Report on the Department of Education's Administration of the Early Grade Class Size Reduction Program FM09-113A*, September 9, 2009 at: https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/FM09_113A.pdf

A mentor once reminded me any one person can be a change maker in any other person's life.

The more positive role models a young person has in their corner the greater the opportunity the young person has to meet a change maker.

Fair Futures coaches, tutors and specialists have been change makers for young people in foster care in NYC. They have helped youth stay on track with academic and career goals, secure safe housing and much more.

Good Evening - My name is Holly Smeltzer. I am a NYC foster parent. I am also the Fair Futures Program Director at the Coalition for Hispanic Family Services.

Just over a year ago, we launched our Coaching Program. Throughout the year, we have witnessed young people making enormous strides towards accomplishing their goals. Our young people have invested in themselves, their communities and our city.

FF staff have celebrated our young people as they have received college acceptances, academic and athletic scholarships, taken on leadership roles, amplified their voices to advocate for themselves and their peers and much more.

Let us show our young people we are here to support them in getting not only to a better place, but a great and self-sustaining, independent place.

We're calling on the Mayor to stand behind his words that New York must "do more to support kids in foster care" by working collaboratively with the City Council to baseline $20 million to save Fair Futures so we can continue to provide foster youth with the supports they need and deserve to be successful adults.

As a member of the FF community and as a foster parent, I have witnessed firsthand the impact of FF programming on young people.

We must invest in our youth now to ensure they have a fair shot at success later.

We must allow Fair Futures coaches, tutors and support staff to continue being change makers in the lives of our young people so they themselves can become change makers for the next generation.

Thank you very much to the Committee and Chair Dromm for the opportunity to speak. Have a great night!

COASTAL PRESERVATION NETWORK

5/21/21

Good morning,
I am writing to implore you to restore the maximum possible amount of funding the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation for the new fiscal year beginning July 1, 2021.

I am the President of Coastal Preservation Network, an all-volunteer, 501c3 organization dedicated to restoring and protecting the coastal environment in Northeast Queens, improving local waterfront parks through hands-on action and advocacy, increasing public access to local waters, and providing environmental education. We focus on MacNeil Park and Powell's Cove Parks in College Point, Queens, two magnificent East River parks that have suffered from dramatic understaffing and overuse during the Covid-19 pandemic.

As you know, NYC Parks suffered a 14% budget cut, amounting to $84 million, in FY2020. This left the parks department dramatically under-resourced. We lost seasonal staff, PEP officers, and gardeners, and there was a hiring freeze. Combined, this has been devastating for parks, and has left park workers with an impossible task.

2020 parks conditions were the worst on record since NYC Parks began recording them in 2004. The biggest issues in our Northeast Queens neighborhood's parks are park conditions (overflowing trash cans, construction/household dumping at parks) and illegal activity, with ATV and dirt bike use topping the list, as well as people starting fires for impromptu bbqs in the rootbeds of 100-year-old trees. There are people golfing in the ballfields of parks, golf balls flying past pedestrians; there are people fishing on our coasts and leaving their hooks, wires, and bait waste behind for runners/walkers/kids/dogs to encounter. While we volunteers do what we can -- we organize events on weekends and weekdays to pick up trash, trim weeds, plant new flowers, and paint over the graffiti – volunteers are not a replacement for parks staff. NYC needs a fully funded and fully staffed Department of Parks and Recreation.

The proposed budget does not return to pre-pandemic levels. In addition, some key elements of upkeep are left out, including basic maintenance like tree pruning, sidewalk repair, tree stump removal, and invasive species control. None of these are addressed in the proposed budget. Restoring the NYC Parks budget is the bare minimum. 1% or more of the city budget must be for NYC Parks, and we need to lift the hiring freeze at NYC Parks. The permanent staff is still nearly 200 short – a huge issue.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration on this matter.

Best,
Kathryn Cervino
President, CPN

COFCCA

Leadership, voice and vision for child welfare in New York State

**New York City Council**
**Committee on Finance**
**Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget Hearing**
**May 25, 2021**
**Testimony submitted by:**
**Kathleen Brady-Stepien, President and CEO, COFCCA**

Good morning, Chairperson Dromm and members of City Council Committee on Finance. I am Kathleen Brady-Stepien and I am the President and CEO of the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA). Our member agencies include over fifty not-for-profit organizations providing foster care, adoption, family preservation, and juvenile justice services in New York City and over 100 agencies providing the same services statewide. On behalf of our member agencies, their thousands of employees, and mostly on behalf of the tens of thousands of children and families that our agencies serve, we thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Throughout the pandemic, our essential workers have gone out into the field each day to support New York City's children, youth, and families in our prevention services, foster care, and juvenile justice programs. We continue to be concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on our families and communities, which have been some of the hardest-hit throughout the pandemic. We continue to ask for your support in ensuring that our nonprofit agencies are well-supported to build back from the pandemic, and that our children, youth, and families are put front and center in the city's pandemic response during this budget year.

**Indirect Cost Rate Funding**

The human services sector stepped up to meet the need of New Yorkers in crisis despite the fact we faced a funding crisis long before our City saw its first case of COVID-19. We are so appreciative that the City Council demanded ICR funding in its FY22 Preliminary Budget response. As you know, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced the addition of $57 million to restore the ICR cut in FY21 and baselining the full $91 million to sustain the program for future years as part of his FY22 Executive Budget! Thank you for championing this critically important issue for our nonprofits! Together, we must ensure this funding makes it into the Adopted Budget.

**Investing in the City's Essential Human Services Workforce**

We must invest in our essential human services workforce in the FY 2022 budget. It is critical for the Adopted FY22 budget to include restoration of ICR funding as well as the follow core investments in the human services workers:

1. **The restoration of the COLA on the personnel services line of all human services contracts at a rate of 3%, at a cost of $48 million for FY22.**
2. **A plan for the administration to promote wage equity in the public sector by correcting the pay disparities the human services workforce experience, as outlined in the City Council's FY22 Preliminary Budget Response.**

Investments in the human services workforce are critical. New York City has suffered a net-loss of over 44,000 human services jobs since last year due to underfunded contracts and compounding cuts at the City and State level. On top of this massive net loss of jobs, City-contracted human services workers, on average, make less than half compared to those outside of the sector with similar credentials and experience. Our workers are invaluable to the health and well-being of the City and they deserve to be compensated fairly.

Underfunding human services contracts come at a direct cost for communities most impacted by COVID-19 due to income inequality, structural racism, and ableism. Our services and workers are invaluable to the health and wellbeing of the City. We join with the voices of the Human Services Council and our nonprofit human services organization partners in advocating to ensure the restoration of ICR funding, COLA for the human services workforce, and a comprehensive plan to promote wage equity in the sector are all included in the FY22 Adopted Budget.

**Fair Futures**

As you know, the Fair Futures program offers life coaches and tutors to foster youth from middle school to age 26, in all 26 New York City-contracted foster care agencies. The program gives the youth practical and emotional support through stable relationships with adults who follow the youth throughout their time in and after foster care. Fair Futures participants have shown increased rates of high school graduation, among other positive findings. Each year, however, the youth and the programs must come to the City and Mayor to ask for the funds to continue the program. Baselining funding for a proactive program that keeps the City from incurring other costs for negative youth outcomes is a matter of practicality.

**We ask the Mayor and City Council to make Fair Futures a permanent fixture in the NYC Budget and baseline $20M for this important program.**

**Investing in Support for Students in Foster Care: DOE Office and Bus Transportation**

We join in with our partners, Advocates for Children of New York, and many other organizations in urging the city to invest in support for students in foster care by providing funding in the Fiscal Year 2022 budget for the following initiatives:

1. **Establish a Department of Education (DOE) Office for Students in Foster Care ($1.5M)**
2. **Provide Bus Transportation for Students in Foster Care ($5M)**

At a time when the Department of Education (DOE) is receiving a historic influx of state and federal funding, we need to ensure that this increased funding will support students in foster care. The educational needs of students in foster care raise issues of justice and equity that

cannot continue to be overlooked. In March 2018, the City's Interagency Foster Care Task Force recommended that the DOE establish an infrastructure to focus on students in foster care that would "oversee and advise a team of borough-based foster care content experts" who would be responsible for providing schools with case consultation and professional development regarding students in foster care, filling a gap that has long existed. That gap continues to exist. As the City determines how to budget the historic amount of funding the DOE is receiving, we again urge that these critically important investments for focusing on the needs of students in foster care and the door-to-door transportation for students in foster care be provided, to continue to provide their educational stability.

**Expansion of Family Enrichment Centers**

We thank the City Council for your support and interest in the Family Enrichment Centers, or FECs. We seek to bolster the availability of primary prevention, services and supports available to all families in a given area categorically, without the intervention of the child welfare system. We are proud of our providers, Children's Village (Bridge Builders), Graham Windham, and Good Shepherd Services for their work alongside families in their communities, to build up supportive places for communities to build together and thrive together. These FECs are a place for families to connect, and to share resources and activities together. Ultimately, they are a measure to reduce families' interaction with the child welfare system by building community supports from within. A recent evaluation study conducted in March 2020 of the FECs has found that families report the FEC assisting them with housing, educational assistance (for themselves or for their child/children), financial management, and assistance with finding jobs/careers.[i] Providing these essential supports for communities has only become more important given the pandemic, which is why we were so pleased to see the Mayor's announcement earlier this month, announcing the expansion of FECs from the current three sites to 30 over the next four years! We are very pleased with this announcement, especially given the recognition for siting the FECs in priority neighborhoods hardest hit by the pandemic. We applaud the Mayor, the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity, and ACS for the partnership in building up these FECs. Thank you to the City Council for all of your support of the FECs!

Thank you to the Council members for allowing me to testify before you today. I am happy to answer any questions that you have. We truly appreciate your partnership and support for our children, families, and providers.

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[i] https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/about/2020/FECEvaluationReport.pdf

**Testimony of Liz Accles, Executive Director**
**Community Food Advocates**

**Testimony before the New York City Council**
**Committee on Finance**
Hearing on Tuesday, May 25, 2021

Good afternoon Chair Dromm and members of the Committee. My name is Liz Accles, Executive Director of Community Food Advocates (CFA). On behalf of Community Food Advocates and the Lunch 4 Learning coalition, it is a pleasure to testify on the Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget and Capital Plan, and to inform this distinguished body of our Lunch 4 Learning FY2022 budget priorities, which is aimed at ensuring the successful implementation of the "Universal Free School Lunch for All" (Universal) program and to build on its foundation.

As you know Community Food Advocates (CFA) spearheads the Lunch 4 Learning campaign, a broad, diverse coalition-based group that, in partnership with the City Council, successfully advocated for Universal Free Meals in all New York City public schools. However, much more work is needed.

Even before the pandemic 1 in 5 children experienced food insecurity, and we know this number has only risen over the past year. Among the 1.1 million students in the NYC school system, 72.8 percent are defined by DOE as economically disadvantaged. Our children rely on school food programs for their daily nutrition. As part of our mission, CFA strives to identify and promote strategies that improve access to nutritious food, including through school meal programs.

Building on universal, we continue to advocate for initiatives that will have the biggest impact on school meal participation. The Office of Food & Nutrition Services' cafeteria redesign—known at DOE as the Cafeteria Enhancement Experience (CEE)—is an impactful and cost-effective approach to increasing participation. So far, the Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS) has redesigned 34 middle and high school

cafeterias, and we would like to see this transformation in school communities across the City.

The presentation of school lunch has a direct impact on school lunch participation rates. The OFNS cafeteria redesign transforms the serving line into a deli-style service that gives students more variety of options on a daily basis. The seating area, which includes diner-style booths, round tables, and high-top seating arrangements, transforms school cafeterias from an institutional configuration to a more welcoming environment for students. Additionally, the food court style serving lines have reduced the time students stand on line to obtain their lunch, allowing for more time to eat and socialize. Lastly, consumption of fruits and vegetables in the enhanced cafeterias are at least four times higher than schools without enhanced cafeterias. Cafeteria redesign should be a priority.

**NYC DOE Should Implement a Master Plan for Cafeteria Redesign for All NYC High Schools & Middle Schools**

No student can learn on an empty stomach. In fact, research directly links participation in school meals to improvements in academic outcomes and classroom behavior. Yet school meal participation declines abruptly during middle school and is even lower among high school students. This is in large part because pre-adolescents and adolescents are sensitive to the stigma associated with school meals and are socially motivated and seeking independence. The redesigned cafeterias accommodate older students' need for autonomy, speed-of-service, and a more welcoming dining experience.

It is critical that we ensure our school meal programs best meet the needs of our students, and the deli-style, "enhanced" cafeteria is an overwhelmingly successful model. The 34 middle school and high school cafeterias—serving 60,000 students—that have received the enhanced cafeteria over the past couple of years have been a huge success. Among the first set of high schools that were enhanced, there was a:

35% increase in lunch participation

If all high school received the enhancement, we project:

30,000 more high school students would participate every day

We propose that DOE adopt a Master Plan to roll out redesign of high school and middle school cafeterias. The onetime capital cost of redesigning a cafeteria is approximately $500,000. Considering the positive benefits, this is an extremely cost-effective initiative. We believe this master plan should be equitably distributed across

School Districts, phased-in by priority: high need/low participation rate; high need regardless of participation rate; and low participation rate/mixed income.

As you know, now more than ever, our public-school students face many challenges. As students return to schools to learn in-person, and eventually to cafeterias to eat, it is imperative that these inherently social spaces are responsive to the trauma brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Cafeteria redesign is the response to ensure students feel safe and secure, by expediting the service line and reducing overcrowding, smaller tables that maximize space and minimize large groups, and reducing frequent surface contact. By increasing participation, it will also help to combat the prevalent food insecurity brought on by the pandemic. Additionally, while some students are now learning in-person again, cafeterias are not currently in use. This is an opportunity to revamp cafeterias for the time when students return to cafeteria spaces.

We were thrilled to see $25 million committed in the Fiscal Year 2020 Capital Budget towards expanding this critical initiative to another 50 cafeterias. We were also pleased to see major expansion of deli-style cafeterias in schools included as a priority in the Speaker's Agenda on Growing Food Equity in New York City. However, to see the full potential of cafeteria redesign initiative realized in an equitable way, an additional $150 million should be allocated to roll this out in another 300 cafeterias over the next five years.

Please see the attached one-pager and cafeteria redesign look book for additional information, including photos and analysis, of the enhanced cafeterias in NYC schools. We hope the Council will continue to be champions for this important initiative. Thank you.

Liz Accles, Executive Director

Community Food Advocates

Lunch 4 Learning Coalition

110 Wall Street

New York, NY 10005

# Scale Up Enhanced Cafeterias in NYC Public Schools




## We call on Mayor De Blasio to commit an additional $30 million per year in the DOE's 5-Year Capital Plan

The NYC DOE Office of Food and Nutrition Services has rolled out an innovative cafeteria redesign in 34 middle and high school buildings (view a map at bit.ly/cafeteria-redesign) serving 60,000 students across the city. In addition, the Chancellor has committed $25 million for approximately 50 more schools. We are calling for another $150 million towards a planned phase-in of 300 more cafeterias.

The food court style serving line includes more menu options daily, and the presentation dramatically increases the appeal of the food. The new serving lines have significantly reduced the time students spend on the line, allowing for more time to eat and decompress.

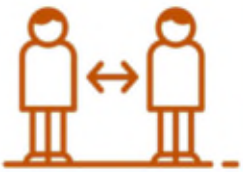
## Enhanced cafeterias facilitate long-term mitigation of COVID-19

As the city prepares for reopening of school buildings in September, new considerations and measures must be taken to secure the safety and health of the school community. To mitigate the risk of COVID-19 exposure, schools must reimagine new structures and implement new strategies to support a healthy learning environment and protect students and staff.

A trauma-informed response must:

- recognize the collective trauma of COVID-19 for all NYC students,
- address physical safety concerns, and
- promote a safe environment to decrease students' stress response.

**The enhanced cafeteria facilitates long-term changes that encourage new social distancing and behavioral standards to reduce future risk.**



Self-service expedites the service line and reducing overcrowding



Deli style service line reduces frequent surface contact by multiple people

Facilitate grab and go options to reduce overcrowding in the cafeteria




Smaller tables maximize space and minimize mixing students



## Enhanced cafeterias have higher school lunch participation

To build on the foundation of universal free school lunch, NYC DOE should enhance the cafeterias of half of all high schools and middles schools.



The lunchrooms are more comfortable and inviting, with diner-style booths, individual seats, and round tables replacing the institutional rectangular tables with benches.

A recent study links universal free meals to academic performance, with increases in test scores equivalent to as much as 10 weeks of learning in math and ELA.

- Syracuse University, July 2019

The first 15 high school enhanced cafeterias, serving 47 schools, experienced a 35% increase in lunch participation.

**35%**
**increase in lunch participation**

If every high school cafeteria in NYC is enhanced,

**30,000** more students would participate every day

## Enhanced cafeterias serve more fruits and vegetables

Compared with schools of the same type without the redesign, enhanced cafeterias served:

**3.0x more**
Bananas, Peppers, & Tomatoes



**4.0x more**
Apples, Carrots, & Spinach





**30.0x more**
Lettuce



**4.9x more**
Broccoli



**11.3x more**
Grapes


*Prepared by*

LUNCH 4 LEARNING

COMMUNITY FOOD ADVOCATES

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*2/2021*




Enhanced Serving Line

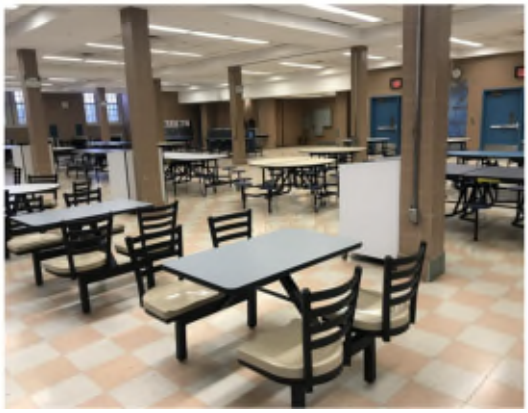


Hot and Cold Daily Options

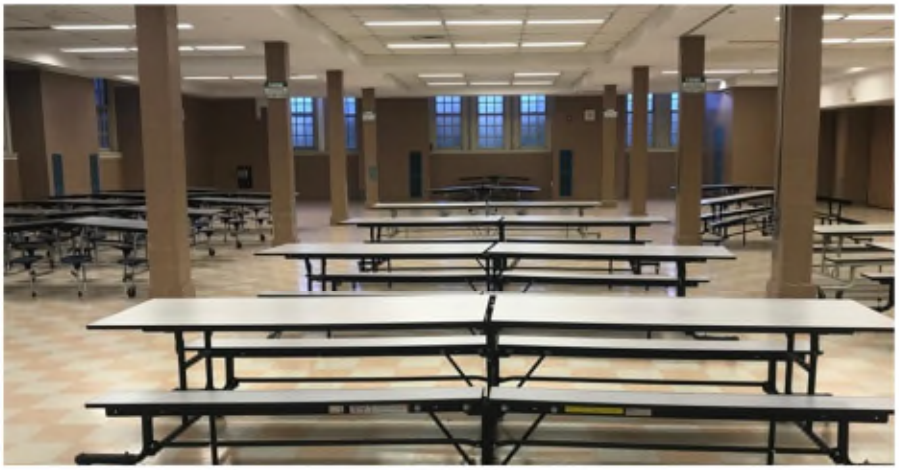




Booths and Small Tables



Dining Area - BEFORE



Dining Area - AFTER



Executive Budget Hearing Testimony Before the New York City Council Finance Committee
May 25, 2021

Presented by:
Cal Hedigan, Chief Executive Officer
Community Access, Inc.
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*Community Access expands opportunities for people living with mental health concerns to recover from trauma and discrimination through affordable housing, training, advocacy, and healing-focused services. We are built upon the simple truth that people are experts in their own lives.*

www.communityaccess.org

Thank you Chair Dromm, and to the other members of the Finance Committee for convening this hearing. As the CEO of Community Access, I lead an organization that has long been at the forefront of efforts to transform our public mental health system into one where the voices of people living with mental health concerns are centered and play a vital part of the design, delivery, and evaluation of services. Our organization was founded in 1974 in response to the closure of psychiatric facilities to support individuals who were transitioning into community living. We are one of the leading providers of supportive housing in NYC, and are the pioneers of an integrated housing model, which has become a best practice nationally: affordable housing where families live alongside people living with mental health concerns.

Our 350 person strong staff work daily to support thousands of New Yorkers living with mental health concerns through supportive housing, mobile treatment teams, training, supported education, advocacy and other healing-focused services. Community Access is also proud to be a founding member of the Correct Crisis Intervention Today in NYC Coalition (CCIT-NYC)[1].

As a member of CCIT-NYC—the coalition that formed to advocate for a health-only response to people experiencing mental health crises—I must discuss the Mayor's proposal to invest $112M in a citywide expansion of the mental health teams to respond to New Yorkers experiencing mental health crises.

While the Mayor's mental health  team proposal moves us in the right direction, there are a number of concerns we have with the proposal that have not yet been addressed. Please refer to my March 15 testimony before the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction.[2] That the City intends to move ahead with a citywide expansion of this program only makes it more urgent that we get our questions answered.

How will 911 call takers be trained to determine when it is appropriate to route to mental health teams instead of police officers?  What steps is the City taking to ensure response times for mental health teams are comparable to other emergency response times in New York? The lack of peer involvement in the mental health team design and delivery is unacceptable, and the City must meaningfully incorporate those who have been negatively impacted by the City's current crisis response system in the past into the design, development, execution, and evaluation of the next system. Failing to do so places the City at risk of replacing one flawed system with another.

CCIT-NYC urges the City Council to invest in a crisis response system that satisfies the following criteria:

[1] http://www.ccitnyc.org/

[2] https://www.communityaccess.org/storage/images/Blog/Blog_Documents/Community_Access_-_Prelim_Budget_Hearing_-_3.15.21_-_For_Submission.pdf

- No police responders
- Three-digit phone number such as 988, in lieu of 911
- Response team to consist of a trained peer and an independent EMT
- Community-based entity/ies to run program
- Peer involvement in all aspects of planning/implementation/oversight
- Oversight board consisting of 51% peers from BIPOC communities
- Creation/funding of non-coercive mental health services ("safety net") to minimize crises in the first place and to serve those for whom crisis de-escalation is insufficient
- Response times comparable to those of other emergencies
- Response available 24/7
- Training of the teams to use a trauma-informed framework and use skilled instructors who are peers
- Crisis response system to be evaluated by transparent outcome/effectiveness metrics

Next, I want to commend the City for its commitment to the expansion of Intensive Mobile Treatment (IMT) teams. Community Access has operated one such team in the Bronx for several years and we are poised to expand this service by adding more teams this year. IMT is an effective model of service delivery, reaching those who have not been well served in more traditional service models. Investing more money in these innovative community based models that meet New Yorkers exactly where they are strengthens our public mental health system.

Further, I want to thank the City Council for its budget advocacy on behalf of the nonprofit sector, supporting the restitution of full indirect cost rate (ICR) funding for the next fiscal year. It is critical that the City follow through on its commitments to fund the true cost of doing business. Funding indirect costs is one part of the puzzle, but more must be done.

The nonprofit sector, and particularly the human services sector, has been underfunded for decades. Having worked in New York City in this sector since 1989, I speak from experience. Today, the nonprofit sector employs more than 600,000 New Yorkers, the majority of whom identify as Black, Indigenous, or other people of color (BIPOC) women.

This is a matter of equity. Human services workers in New York City are overwhelmingly women (over 82%) and four-fifths of human services workers are women of color (80%). Our contracts are structured in such a way that nonprofits cannot pay our workforce a living wage. The median cost for rent in New York City has gone up more than 20% since 2010, yet in that same period the average pay for human services workers has increased **less than any other low-pay industry in the city** including retail, restaurants, and personal/laundry services. The fact that I have to include human services workers in the category of "low-pay" is shameful in and of itself.

It is long past time for them to be compensated at a level that is commensurate with their service. City-contracted human services workers, on average, earn less than half the wages of

those outside of the sector with similar credentials and experience. The human services workforce is our city's second lowest-paid labor force, after restaurant workers. This is shameful. City funding levels must increase to address the inequitable salary structure in this sector. In the last calendar year, the City has allowed the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for human services workers to expire in the middle of the pandemic by not renewing it in the FY21 budget, and has failed to enact comprehensive emergency pay for low-wage City-contracted frontline workers. The day to day costs of living in New York City are high, and the City must contract with nonprofit providers at levels that enable our staff - particularly our direct service staff - to live with dignity.

These are the very workers who have been showing up to work every day for the last 15 months, providing services to some of our city's most vulnerable people. Their work is essential and invaluable. The way each and every one of them has stepped up during this pandemic has only underscored that fact.

The FY22 budget must include: the restoration of the COLA on the personnel services line of all human services contracts at a rate of at least 3%, and a plan for the administration to promote wage equity in the public sector by correcting the pay disparities the human services workforce experience, as outlined in the City Council's FY22 Preliminary Budget Response.

These urgent investments are needed while workers, advocates, providers, and elected officials continue to work together on more comprehensive solutions to ensure that human services workers finally earn fair pay for their essential labor. Going forward, the City must understand that, as with the cost of living, the cost of doing business increases incrementally each year. The City must do away with stagnant funding levels and provide contracts with annual escalator clauses as a standard practice in order to adequately support the providers of essential services and their workforce.

The need for better, more equitable and compassionate services in our city has never been greater, given the painful human toll of our dual public health and economic crises.

Homelessness is at a record high in New York City. According to the Coalition for the Homeless' 2020 State of the Homeless Report:

- The number of single adults sleeping in Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelters has reached an all-time high (18,694 per night);
- Single adults in shelters are remaining in shelter for longer periods of time (1 in every 10 single adults in DHS shelters has spent between three and four of the past four years in shelter);

- A significant portion of single adults in DHS shelters experience one disability (DHS estimates that 2/3 of single adults in their shelters live with at least one disability and cite "mental illness" as one of the common disabilities among the people they serve);
- The number of families living within DHS shelters has tapered off, but eligibility to the system remains incredibly difficult to achieve (65% of family applicants had to submit two or more applicants before the City determined they were in fact homeless and eligible for shelter).

Experiencing homelessness can lead to death. A separate Coalition for the Homeless report found:

*As of June 1, 2020, the overall New York City mortality rate due to COVID-19 was 200 deaths per 100,000 people. For homeless New Yorkers sleeping in shelters, it was 321 deaths per 100,000 people on an age-adjusted basis – or 61 percent higher than the New York City rate.*[3]

Our city must move on from the idea of a right to shelter to the understanding of *housing as a fundamental human right* – and a vital determinant of individual health and mental health – and we must establish policies and budget priorities that support that truth.

While the City and State have invested heavily in new housing developments, we know more needs to be done. More investment is needed in order to develop and preserve supportive and deeply affordable housing. Nonprofit housing developers are mission-driven and committed to permanent affordability. They are natural partners for the City in ending the affordable housing crisis.

Economic and racial segregation persists throughout our city. Thus, our housing policy must be shaped by the need to redress the results of discriminatory practices and answer the call for racial justice. This means looking at zoning changes in the borough of Manhattan, fighting back against NIMBY assaults on supportive and affordable housing anywhere, but especially in areas where wealth and gentrification are the norm.

I know I'm not alone when I say that community-based housing providers such as Community Access are ready, willing, and able to work with the City and the State to build housing that fits the needs of New Yorkers who have long been underserved in our city. This need cannot be overstated. As we all know, New Yorkers experiencing homelessness have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and they live with more severe health challenges than their housed neighbors[4]. Housing is a vital part of healthcare and must be front and center of any conversations about how to improve the health of New Yorkers.

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[3] https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/press/homeless-new-yorkers-living-in-shelters-have-higher-covid-19-mortality-rates-new-report-finds/

[4] Ibid.

I would ask you to consider the New York Police Department (NYPD) budget as the place from which funds can be taken and reinvested in the services that address New Yorkers' needs. More so than anything else, budgets are indications of a city's priorities. New York can signal an important shift in the FY22 budget by deprioritizing spending on the NYPD and Department of Correction (DOC). We need to reimagine public safety —a militarized police force and bloated carceral system are not the answer. Instead, we must invest in services that address people's real needs: access to affordable housing, quality healthcare, healthy food options, living wage jobs, equitable educational opportunities.

New York City spends over $400,000 per year to imprison one person in a city jail cell. With equivalent funds, we could house 16 New Yorkers in supportive housing. Our budget must shift to reflect our values. We must make it a priority to stand for racial justice and a just recovery – one that strengthens communities and furthers equity rather than pouring money into broken and racist structures.

I am proud of the work Community Access and other allied organizations have done to push the conversation about mental health in a direction that is more person-centered and rights-based. With thoughtful policy choices and investments, we can create a more just city that meets people's needs, protects them from harm, recognizes human dignity, and supports them to make decisions about their own health and wellness.

Thank you for hearing my testimony today. I look forward to working with the members of the New York City Council and agency partners to advance budget priorities and policy changes that will support the health and mental health of New Yorkers and create a model of post pandemic recovery for other cities to follow.

Thank you so much Chairman Dromm and City Council members for allowing me to testify this evening. My name is Tamika Mapp, State Committeewoman for the 68th Assembly District and a Parent. I am testifying as a parent, a community activist with AQE in East Harlem and the South Bronx and an elected official for East Harlem. Our city government has a responsibility to invest in our children and seniors by allocating funds from oversaturated organizations such as the NYPD. Please consider reallocating the following funds to help ensure our black and brown students do not get the short end of the stick. We need to invest in $705 million to ensure each school has a nurse, early screening for dyslexia. Invest in $445 million in infrastructure and Tech: universal broadband and access to technology, ensuring we have a library and a librarian in each school so our students can understand how to thoroughly research fact from fiction and reduce class size. Invest in $1Billion for a real investment in Culturally Responsive school programs and give teachers the opportunity to adapt their curriculum to help teach each child. Invest in $1 million to support students who are differently-abled, support our students in foster care and the shelter system and to ensure our

English language learners and immigrant families have access to translation to ensure they can advocate for their children as well. Invest $1 million dollars for universal childcare and bring the current subsidy for family childcare providers up to a living wage.  Invest $2 million for our seniors, to open our centers and to ensure we have staff that will not abuse our seniors, increase funding for older new Yorkers and direct home care services. The last point I make today is we must end the school to prison pipeline by removing police officers in our schools and ensuring we have trauma related mental health providers for each school, STEAM opportunities and CIVIC engagement throughout our schools. I will be submitting a written testimony and I thank you for your time and will leave you with this quote from Nelson Mandala: Our children are the rock on which our future will be built, our greatest asset as a nation. They will be the leaders of our country, the creators of our national wealth who care for and protect our people. So, please invest in our children.

**Chinese-American Planning Council**

**Testimony to the New York City Council Finance Committee**

**Fiscal Year 2022 Preliminary Budget Hearings**

**5/25/2021**

Good afternoon. My name is Carlyn Cowen, testifying on behalf of the Chinese American Planning Council. I would like to thank the members of the Finance Committee for the opportunity to testify before you today and for your leadership on issues that deeply impact New York City's Asian American Pacific Islander, immigrant and low-income community members. 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, which brought waves of Asian immigrants to New York City. Initially a provider of counseling services to low-income families referred by local schools, CPC has continued to expand its program offerings over the years to become 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 the boroughs of Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. Our revenue is approximately half New York City funding.

CPC now employs a team of over 700 staff members, many of whom come from the same neighborhoods we serve. 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.

CPC offers holistic services that target both individual and family needs. Our programs are available for community members of all ages and backgrounds, and span three key service areas:

- **Education:** We provide high-quality learning opportunities for all ages—from Pre-K and after-school enrichment to adult English language classes—because education is lifelong.
- **Family Support:** We make it easier for individuals and families to access personalized social resources because support is fundamental at every age.
- **Community and Economic Empowerment:** We empower New Yorkers to represent and to advocate for themselves and their communities because their leadership is essential for positive—and lasting—social change. We engage with individuals to plan and develop their career paths because professional success is critical for economic independence.

Our affiliate, CPC Home Attendant Program, also offers care for homebound individuals.

**Human Services Contract Support**

The human services sector of our City is in crisis, yet this sector was the lifeline during COVID-19 and the economic crisis. Providers have long been sounding the alarm about the impact of the chronic underfunding of government contracts, and now we have reached a breaking point. Without a crucial investment on our current contracts, my organization will have to reevaluate how we can engage with the City to provide crucial services to our communities. As things currently stand, we can no longer carry the deficit of our City contracts.

The gap between what the City funds on our contracts and what we can supplement with private and philanthropic dollars has grown too wide. It is vital that no cuts are made to human service programs as part of the mandated budget reductions and the chronic underfunding of the sector is rectified.

CPC Human Services staff have been on the frontlines throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. 69% of essential workers are made up of immigrants (74% of them undocumented), who risk their health daily to put food on the table through COVID-19. As of July 2020, 1.1 million individuals in NYC have lost their jobs and filed for unemployment benefits, and 30% of New Yorkers were unable to pay their rent. As of March 2021, 70% of our community members reported losing jobs or income.

We were thrilled to see that the City restored indirect funding, a critical lifeline for many organizations, but there is so much more to do to stabilize the human services sector and build a just recovery.

CPC provides services to 60,000 New Yorkers every year that the City of New York would otherwise have to provide. Our contracts last upwards of 10 years, with no cost-escalators to account for increasing costs, on contracts that are already underfunded. This lack of investment on our full contracts has a real impact on our ability to deliver quality programs and invest appropriately in our staff. Due to the gaps in funding, and lack of cost-escalators in our City contracts, we have had to take the following actions: (examples include passing health insurance costs along to staff, reducing benefits, layoffs, not making necessary repairs to buildings, spending on endowments, reducing program hours, closing programs, etc.)

**Youth and Community Services**

We thank the City Council for its commitment to provide innovative programming, employment, and opportunity to the city's young people. We are also grateful that the City Council recognizes that community development includes support for adults, both by providing working parents with programs that nurture their children during the work day and summer, and by equipping immigrant and adult learners with educational opportunities to support themselves and their families.

CPC's recommendations include:

**Restore funding to critical programs**, including summer programs such as SYEP, SONYC, BEACON and COMPASS, senior services, and all Council Initiatives (such as Access Health NYC, Adult Literacy Program, Geriatric Mental Health Initiative, and legal services initiatives). Create a universal Summer Youth Employment Program to guarantee jobs for all young people.

**Older Adult Services**

In NYC, 23% of AAPI seniors live in poverty. More than 2 in 3 AAPI seniors are limited English Proficient. These community remembers rely on community service like CPC for everything from adequate nutrition to mental health provision. In order to ensure that our seniors are properly supported, we recommend the following:

Expedite the implementation of the Senior Center model budget

We were disappointed to see that the Preliminary budget makes no new investment in senior centers despite a model budget that promised $20 million in baselined funds. urge the expedition of the full $20,000,000 in funding by FY20, rather than the proposed FY21. This funding will have a hugely positive impact on the operations of these programs. As stated, this funding applies only to personnel and programming, but there are many other upgrades and expansions of the senior center network that are necessary to meet the needs of older adults across the city, especially in new immigrant communities. We urge the Council to prioritize the

implementation of this funding so that we can attend to these other needs such as meals, rent, OTPS and other associated costs.

Restore home delivered meal funding and enhance per meal reimbursement funding to $12.1 million

Of particular importance this year is funding for both congregate and home-delivered meals, neither of which have received increases in several years. Current reimbursement rates are below the national average, according to DFTA. And while culturally appropriate meals such as kosher and halal are mandated by DFTA, they are more expensive, resulting in a deficit to nonprofits that provide them. Therefore, we request that per-meal reimbursements be increased by $1.00, at a total cost of $12.1 million in FY20.

Restore funding to key programs including Support our Seniors, Geriatric Mental Health Initiative, Senior Centers for Immigrant Populations and Healthy Aging

This funding is critical to ensure that seniors have wraparound supportive services, and we recommend restoring and enhancing this funding.

**Immigrants and Communities of Color**

Especially under the current federal administration, immigrants and communities of color face significant threats. To that end, we urge the Council to invest in the following supports for these communities:

Enhance the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund (NSF) to $5 Million

Leadership development, financial management, management information systems improvements, and outcomes system development supported through the NSF will allow more community groups to strengthen their ability to serve New York City's most vulnerable communities.

Immigrant Legal Services

The Comptroller's recent report on immigration court cases showed that AAPIs have the highest representation of immigration court cases, with Chinese New Yorkers representing fully 20% of all active cases. AAPIs experience some of the highest rates of Limited English Proficiency, with 80% of Asian Americans in New York speak a language other than English at home, and of those, more than 55% speak English less than "very well." At the same time, cultural barriers and the political climate are making it both increasingly important, and increasingly difficult to access legal services. AAPI and other immigrant community members need increasing legal support around employment, housing, and immigration issues. In fact, Chinese Americans in New York have the highest rate of applying for asylee status of all ethnic groups. Yet there are no Asian American legal services providers, and no programs for creating wraparound know your rights, intake, case management, and follow-up support through Community Based organizations who have trust and language and cultural competence. We recommend that the

City and the Council prioritize building legal services programs for AAPI New Yorkers, with CBOs as an anchor.

## COVID-19 Impacts and Recommendations

Public Health and Health Access Impacts

The data we have seen on COVID shows what all of the organizations serving communities of color already knew, that our communities are being harder hit by COVID-19, a result of systemic inequalities in our healthcare system that long predate COVID-19, but are now being laid bare. However the data does not capture the experiences of community members in the shadows- immigrants, Limited English Proficient, uninsured, and more. Some of the things we have seen include:

- Community members that have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 refusing to seek medical care even when they need it because they do not have insurance or are worried about affording care, or because they are concerned that it will somehow impact their immigration status;
- Community members that are limited English proficient (LEP) having inaccurate information or lacking up-to-date information about policies and best practices;
- Community members dying at home before they ever get testing or care;
- Community members unable to comply by social distancing rules because of overcrowded or insecure housing, and homeless community members having a complete lack of access to sanitation or hygiene.
- COVID-19 ripping through residential and nursing facilities, as well as shelters and jails, disproportionately hurting communities of color, low-income, immigrant and limited English proficient community members.

Economic Impacts

It goes without saying that the economic impacts and health impacts are inextricably related. Communities of color are both bearing the brunt of the economic hit, while simultaneous being forced to endanger ourselves while working on the front lines of this crisis. Some of the things we have seen include:

- More than half of our community members surveyed reported that they are out of work or income, and will run out of money in the coming weeks;
- Many of our community members continue to work, either because they are essential workers or because they cannot afford to stop working since they are left out of Federal relief and State unemployment benefits;
- In one of our preschool families, 20 out of 24 families lost all income within two weeks, and less than half qualify for Federal relief or State unemployment, leaving them unable to pay rent, buy groceries or pay for prescriptions;
- Our young people reporting caring for their younger siblings while their parents work (and juggling remote learning simultaneously), and rationing their daily food intake because they are running out of food;

- Our homebound seniors unable to get food delivered through the City's meal program, or receiving inadequate meals- including two pieces of bread and two pats of butter as a meal, or meal boxes featuring items like pudding, fruit cups, crackers, cheerios, and applesauce as a five-day meal supply;

Anti-Asian and anti-Asian American Discrimination

Our Asian American, particularly East Asian community members are experiencing a double virus of discrimination and racism. We are grateful to the City and the City Council for taking a strong stand on this issue and for your leadership. Our community members have been experiencing:

- Verbal and physical harassment while traveling to work or running errands. This includes frontline healthcare and essential workers who have become increasingly scared of going to work.
- Fears of going outside or seeking treatment because of reports of harassment and violence against Asian Americans.

Yet while all of this happens, the City is slashing funding to the very programs and social safety net programs that support these communities and help combat disproportionate health outcomes. Services like senior food programs, homeless services, youth development and summer programs, public health and others are experiencing more demand than ever before, yet instead of boosting funding to these programs, the City is cutting them. Discretionary funding, often the way that small organizations and people of color-led CBO's access city funding, has been cut retroactive to March 22nd with the exception of programs that are the same as they were before the PAUSE order.

These services are more important than ever in addressing the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on communities of color. Our staff have been designated as essential workers, yet we are on the front lines without adequate PPE, and many of us barely making minimum wage. We need to fully fund our essential workers, and fully fund these essential programs and safety net services. CPC urges the City to fully fund all services and contracts through at least FY21, and ensure that contracts have maximum flexibility to allow organizations to meet emerging and changing needs. Additionally, CPC advocates alongside our collogues at CACF (Coalition of Asian Children and Families) for establishing a new $4 million "**Recovery and Healing for APA New Yorkers**" citywide initiative proposal. COVID-19 has unknown long term mental and physical health impacts on our community members, and our communities deserve to heal holistically and with dignity. The initiative will allow CBOs to provide culturally competent, in-language, and intentional support for our communities as we recover from this pandemic.

At the same time, while key social services are being cut, the NYPD budget remains largely untouched. Overpolicing of communities of color and the increasing expanding of the NYPD into social services- from homeless shelters to the subways- contributes to adverse public health impacts, and fails to keep our communities safe and healthy. Rather, we urge the City to invest in critical programs and social safety nets, in relief for everyone, regardless of work or status, and in keeping the organizations that serve communities of color and low income communities whole.

CPC is grateful for the Council's leadership on the issues impacting Asian American, immigrant and low income New Yorkers. Thank you for your support and the opportunity to testify, I am

available to answer questions. Additional questions may be directed to Carlyn Cowen at ccowen@cpc-nyc.org.

Cooper Square
Community
Land Trust

**Testimony to the New York City Council**
**Committee on Finance**
**Executive Budget Hearing for FY 2022**

**May 25, 2021**

Good afternoon, Committee Chair Dromm and members of the Committee, and thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing. My name is Ryan Hickey and I am the Project Director at the Cooper Square Community Land Trust. We are the longest-functioning community land trust in the City, stewarding the land under 21 buildings and ensuring the permanent affordability of more than 328 residential units. We are also home to 22 commercial spaces on the Lower East Side, who are an essential part of our model and community. We are proud and active members of the New York City Community Land Initiative, the City's only coalition advancing community land trusts and other social housing models.

The Cooper Square CLT and 17 partner organizations are part of a citywide Community Land Trust (CLT) Initiative working to develop CLTs and permanently-affordable housing, community and commercial spaces, and other critical needs. **We urge the City Council to fully fund the Citywide CLT Initiative at $1.51 million in FY2022, to help stabilize housing, combat speculation, and ensure a just recovery from the COVID-19 crisis in communities of color.** (Please see attached one-pager and supporting material.)

Launched in FY2020, the Citywide CLT Initiative has supported vital CLT education, organizing and incubation across the five boroughs. In less than two years, the initiative has made major progress--incorporating new CLTs and expanding existing ones; engaging thousands of community members; developing CLT steering committees and founding boards; completing property research and planning; and formalizing strategic partnerships. Two CLTs in the initiative have acquired first or new properties, while others are completing feasibility studies and negotiating for acquisitions.

Through this work, CLTs have taken root in the South and Northwest Bronx, East Harlem, Jackson Heights, Brownsville, East New York and beyond. As community-controlled nonprofits, CLTs work to remove land from the speculative market and bring it into community control. Local CLTs are working to develop and protect deeply-affordable mutual housing, limited-equity cooperatives, and 1-4 family homes, as well as commercial and cultural spaces, community gardens, community-owned solar, microgrids and other infrastructure. This diversity reflects the CLT model's flexibility to meet a wide range of community needs, while preserving public investment in housing and other neighborhood development.

Throughout the pandemic, CLT initiatives have not only sustained but deepened their work. In 2019, HPD stepped in and transferred two distressed rent stabilized buildings on the Lower East Side to the Cooper Square CLT, preventing them from falling into the predatory market and preserving 36 units of deeply affordable housing. Despite the challenges COVID-19 brought on,

Cooper Square
Community
Land Trust

we held 5 virtual workshops in the last year, all of which have been multilingual and accessible to people without internet or smartphone access. We have successfully adapted and engaged a large majority of tenants in these workshops thanks to committed public funding through the City Council, and through one-on-ones and sustained political education, we are developing tenants into leaders while creating resident-led, democratic governance structures. Additionally, we are engaging tenants in the rehab of their buildings. We aim to demystify the rehab process, develop a shared knowledge of development processes, and we will continue to create replicable training material for other housing justice organizations.

In FY2022, the CLT Initiative seeks expanded funding to sustain and build on this progress--and ensure that CLTs are part of a comprehensive strategy to combat displacement in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. In FY2022, the Initiative will engage two new CLTs and an additional citywide technical assistance provider; and deepen community organizing, planning and stewardship that are at the heart of the CLT model. With increased funding, the Cooper Square CLT will be able to dedicate more staffing resources for organizing, enabling deeper tenant engagement and leadership development strategies. We will continue developing and strengthening a tenant-led, democratic infrastructure while organizing political education events through multilingual workshops, developing committees to oversee the rehab processes, and holding Board elections. Continued, expanded resources could also mean further acquisitions. While we are getting a glimpse of normalcy through aggressive vaccination efforts, we know that our housing stock is still at risk of falling prey to predatory equity and that if we want a more sustainable future which centers environmental, racial, and economic justice, we cannot and should not fully “return to normal”. Only stronger housing protections, more democratic acquisition and preservation strategies, and innovative land and housing ownership models like CLTs can bring about this future.

As we look toward a post-pandemic future, we urge the City Council to center CLTs and other initiatives that advance racial justice and community control. CLTs have stabilized housing in the wake of past crises--for example, preventing foreclosures on CLT land after the 2008 financial crash, and rebuilding in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. Strong CLTs, combined with policymaking that removes land and housing from the speculative market, will be key to a just recovery in Black and brown neighborhoods hardest-hit by the pandemic.

We urge the City Council to redouble its commitment to CLTs at this critical time, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

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**Community Service Society of New York**
**Testimony before the**
**New York City Council Finance Committee**
**New York City Council Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget**

May 25th, 2021

Good afternoon. My name is Juan Pinzon, Director of Health Services at the Community Service Society of New York (CSS). CSS respectfully submits this testimony on the Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget.

CSS is a 175-year-old 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to fighting poverty and strengthening New York. It seeks to address economic disparity through research, advocacy, and innovative programs that strengthen and benefit all New Yorkers. CSS recognizes that access to quality affordable health care is essential to building strong, equitable, and economically secure communities. Our health programs help New Yorkers enroll into health insurance coverage, find healthcare if they are ineligible or cannot afford coverage, and help them use their coverage or otherwise access the healthcare system. We do this through a live-answer helpline and through our partnerships with over 50 community-based organizations throughout New York State. Annually, CSS and its partners serve over 300,000 New Yorkers, saving them over $60 million dollars in healthcare costs.

In this testimony, CSS urges the City Council to increase funding for the NYC Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program (MCCAP), which is part of the Access Health NYC initiative, from $425,000 to $750,000 in the FY22 budget. During the COVID-19 public health crisis the City should leverage every dollar available to strengthen programs like MCCAP that provide a lifeline for those struggling to access the coverage and care they need. The new federal American Recovery Act (stimulus) funding provides the City with an opportunity to precisely do that.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the enduring inequities that permeate almost every part of our healthcare system and prevent New York City's communities of color, immigrants, people who are LGBTQ, and people with disabilities and mental health or substance use disorders from accessing the care they need. Additionally, residual Trump-era anti-immigrant coverage exclusions, rising health care prices and a complex healthcare system create additional barriers to care. There are also thousands of New Yorkers who need help this year navigating and accessing enhanced financial assistance to purchase Affordable Care Act

coverage and COBRA premium support under the new federal American Recovery Act. This is where a program like MCCAP can make a significant difference because of its community-based approach that can provide culturally and linguistically competent guidance, remove barriers, and improve access to affordable care.

MCCAP relies on the Community Service Society (CSS) and a network of 12 community-based organizations (CBOs) who work directly with the most vulnerable populations across the city—over 80 percent of MCCAP clients are people of color and/or speak a language other than English at home. CSS acts as the hub with its live, toll-free helpline while advocates at 12 CBOs serve as the spokes that provide in-person services in 15 languages and at 15 different locations across all five boroughs. The advocates are trained and supported by CSS to help people understand their insurance, resolve health insurance problems, get medical services, access affordable care for those who are uninsured, and address social determinants of health.

The program was launched in February 2020, right before the pandemic began creating havoc around the city. Since then, the CSS helpline and CBOs have provided much-needed advocacy assistance to over 4,200 clients who have struggled to secure coverage and medically necessary care during this difficult time, obtaining a favorable outcome for them in 90% of the cases, and saving them over $300,000 in healthcare related costs. Some examples of our health advocacy work include:

- providing insurance navigation to those who have lost their job-based coverage or are uninsured;
- helping clients get a COVID-19 test or vaccine without paying co-pays under the State's special emergency rules;
- helping clients request prior authorizations over the phone when their providers are unable to do so;
- helping undocumented clients access Emergency Medicaid services that now cover COVID-19 testing and treatment; and
- addressing social determinants of health, such as food insecurity and unemployment, by helping clients apply for food stamps and unemployment insurance.

New York City residents need trusted and experienced MCCAP advocates on their side now more than ever to help them access the coverage and care they need. MCCAP also stands ready to help the city begin its path towards an inclusive post-pandemic recovery by serving as a trusted advocate that can provide reliable information to marginalized communities of color about COVID-19 vaccine distribution, safety, and effectiveness. To ensure that, we respectfully ask for the New York City Council to increase MCCAP funding from $425,000 to $750,000 in the FY22 budget. With the additional funding, MCCAP will be able serve thousands of additional clients by increasing funding to the existing network of CBOs and procuring additional CBOs that can provide in-person services in districts that are currently underserved.

Community Service Society | Fighting Poverty Strengthening New York

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony today. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at: 212.614.5353 or jpinzon@cssny.org.

**Testimony to the New York City Council's Committee on Finance**

**Executive Budget Hearing held on May 25, 2021**

*Presented by the Consortium for Worker Education, Inc.*

Thank you Committee Chair Dromm, Council members and Committee staff for the opportunity to testify about how the Consortium for Worker Education (CWE) and our network of workforce development community-based organizations (CBOs) and union partners ameliorates the numbers of unemployed New Yorkers. CWE actively engages with the City Council and State agencies to deliver workforce education and training to underserved NYC community residents. CWE's ***Jobs to Build On program (JtBO) and Worker Service Center Program (WSC)*** were launched by the City Council as its own Workforce Development initiatives.

CWE is unique in its structure, demonstrating collaborative relations between organized labor and community groups on behalf of workers. While such a mutually benefiting relationship is often recommended, nationally, it only exists in New York City.

The economic impacts of this pandemic will not be short-lived. The rising unemployment levels are impacting communities of color the most, the same communities that have suffered in the highest numbers from COVID-19. We need government action, at the local, state, and federal level, to help working families survive the crisis and re-enter the workforce.

At CWE, that means uplifting the integral community organizations and unions that NYC workers know, trust, and depend on. Those groups are uniquely equipped to support our city's unemployed and underemployed, not simply with their workforce development offerings, but their holistic approaches to supporting the individual worker. They understand that it is difficult to find and keep a job if a person's basic needs are not met first.

This testimony will provide some details about how CWE's network of workforce development partners are supporting those unemployed New Yorkers seeking to enter, re-enter or return to the workforce. CWE has commissioned a series of studies by economist James Parrott examining the City's economic recovery over the past year. The overall findings are that hundreds of thousands of workers will not be returning to the pre-pandemic workforce before 2022-23.

The Consortium consists of over 40 trusted community-based organizations, including our senior partners: Henry Street Settlement, Brooklyn Workforce Innovations (BWI), SOBRO, Non-Traditional Employment for Women (NEW), Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT),

CAMBA, Per Scholas and Urban Upbound who participate through CWE's Council funded programs: ***Jobs to Build On (JtBO), Worker Service Centers (WSC)*** *or the* ***Immigrant Protection Group (IPG).*** Our network partners provide an array of employment services, including job placement, industry-specific training, and workforce education opportunities. These organizations quickly transitioned to host these classes and services virtually after the statewide pause in March 2020.

Throughout FY 2021, these groups have continued apace with their education programs, reorganized their classes, and guaranteed that their students received both educational continuity and institutional, material, and personal support. CWE's service resource umbrella has been integral to sustaining these important programs in economically distressed communities.

As part of this holistic model, CWE's partners have expanded security net services—securing unemployment insurance, growing nutrition assistance programs, providing internet access and loans of tech equipment, building resources to access childcare, healthcare, and housing, and connecting workers to timely vital social services. Since March, unemployed New Yorkers have been placed ongoingly in the growing number of essential service jobs in such fields as healthcare, transportation, and construction.

CWE's workforce development Network trains and places workers in Essential occupations including:

- **The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)**, part of CWE's JtBO Initiative, works with formerly incarcerated job seekers, who have entered employment in Essential service fields like the cleaning and sanitation services at NYCHA housing projects.
- **CAMBA** put job seekers in Central Brooklyn to work in Essential sector industries like health care, security at homeless shelters, and wholesale grocery distribution.
- Many of the graduates of **Brooklyn Workforce Initiatives (BWI)** have gained employment in Essential jobs such as bus drivers and NYCHA maintenance workers.

CWE's network of workforce preparation, training and remote education services include:

- **Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT)** went to remote learning services, with its 30 online ESOL and HSE classes were maintained with a 70% attendance rate.
- The **Coalition for the Homeless** program provides computer classes, job readiness training and internships to women living in homeless shelters.
- The **Center for Family Life,** which supports worker co-op development in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, has continued to provide remote ESOL workshops, workforce development, and family counseling to its participants. In response to COVID-19, a new line of business is being developed to perform deep disinfection cleaning in commercial buildings.
- **Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC)** has launched a virtual culinary skills certifications program.

CWE's network delivers robust safety net services in housing, healthcare, unemployment insurance, food/nutrition assistance and temporary financial support to New Yorkers in need. Of note, some of those programs include:

- **Urban Upbound** of Northwest Queens organized a food distribution network that serves some of the largest housing projects in the city.
- **The Independent Drivers Guild** created **"Labor Delivers,"** a program in which unemployed taxi and black car drivers deliver food to people who might otherwise go hungry. Within a month of its inception, over 11,000 drivers were employed in food delivery, and over 6 million meals had been delivered to New York City residents across the 5 boroughs.
- **Henry Street Settlement** in Manhattan and **CAMBA** in Brooklyn have created and operate some of the largest community food banks in NYC.

As the public health crisis persists, CWE and our partners are actively engaged in city-wide workforce development recovery efforts. The Consortium, in partnership with James Parrot of the New School Center for New York City Affairs, established the *COVID-19 Economic Recovery Project* with the objective of monitoring New York City's ongoing economic and employment conditions and developing policy and programmatic recommendations to facilitate worker and small business recovery. We are fervently committed to the continued support of New York's workers in need of education, training, and upgrade skills in our changed new economy.

Given this crisis for workers, to who's "going back," to lost employment, to profound economic turmoil, CWE has, as its mandate, to do whatever in our ability to ameliorate the burden to our City's current and future workers; to partner and collaborate by all means possible; to secure critical resources and to create and innovate for new, sustainable work opportunities.

## The Consortium for Worker Education

CWE's *Jobs to Build On (JTBO)* workforce development program is funded annually by the New York City Council for worker training and employment with a focus on neighborhoods with high and long-term unemployment. JtBO networks with workforce education and training CBOs to recruit, train, and place unemployed and underemployed New Yorkers. Since JtBO was formed in 2007, it has trained more than 19,000 and placed more 25,000 New Yorkers in quality, well-paying careers. The FY21 average hourly wage for JtBO job placements is $18.05.

CWE's *Worker Service Centers (WSC)* program provides instructional services to community-based organizations that conduct workforce training for New York City residents. These services range from job readiness and computer skills classes to short-term occupational training. WSC participants are provided with the basic skills and job readiness preparation to advance to Jobs to Build On and other job training programs.

CWE's *Immigrant Protection Group (IPG)* is a coalition of 13 union and community-based organizations that collaborate to advocate for the rights of immigrants. Under normal circumstances, the mission of the partnership includes asylum services and family petitions, ESOL and citizenship classes, legal fraud prevention education and other services. Many partners have added new services to respond to Covid-related safety net, health, housing, and general welfare concerns of the immigrant community.

The CWE Health Care Institute has delivered Allied Health Care occupational education and training for 14 essential worker job titles to 1199 SEIU's entry-level healthcare workers in the NYC's care-continuum. This includes certification preparation for new and upgraded employment.

The Child Care Facilitated Enrollment Project (FEP) was developed in 2002 to assist working parents to increase access to childcare subsidies and quality care in New York City through a streamlined process for children up to 13 years of age with qualifying incomes. This project is administered by CWE in coordination with the state and city childcare agencies.

Together with its community and labor partners, the Consortium for Worker Education's network served over 45,000 residents in FY19-20. A third of JtBO placements that year were in union jobs. Additionally, CWE also partners with the NYC Central Labor Council (CLC) and 46 of the CLC's affiliates to provide vocational training and skills upgrades to tens of thousands of unionized workers in all sectors. For nearly two decades, CWE has delivered training for NYC Building and Construction Trades Council's E.J. Molloy Construction Skills pre-apprenticeship program.

To learn more about the **Consortium for Worker Education**, visit cwe.org or follow us on social media at **@cwenyc** on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

**Testimony to Committee on Finance**

*Submitted to Finance on May 25, 2021*

*Prepared by Dance/NYC*

*Presented by: Alejandra Duque Cifuentes, Executive Director*

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**On behalf of Dance/NYC (www.dance.nyc), a service organization that serves over 5,000 individual dance artists, 1,200 dance-making entities, and 500 non-profit dance companies and the many for-profit dance businesses based in the metropolitan New York City area, including BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Color) dance workers, immigrants, and disabled dance workers, Dance/NYC joins colleague advocates working across creative disciplines in thanking the Committee for your leadership during this time and in requesting:**

1. **The City implements the Cultural Plan for Recover (CPR), which equitably invests 70 million dollars in the arts and cultural sector to best reach those people, programs, and organizations who need support and can lead the sector forward;**
2. **The City to establish an artist registry to be used as a mechanism to communicate with, collect data from, and support art workers going forward;**
3. **The City to revise and extend the NYC Artists Corps to create ongoing workforce support for art workers;**
4. **The Committee include the Arts and Culture communities in their economic support and relief plans and pass legislation to protect our organizations and workers;**
5. **The Committee acknowledge the ongoing lasting impacts of slavery, establish and execute a plan to address those impacts, and repair the harm done by immediately establishing a Commission for Reparations for past and continuing harms inflicted**

**upon Black and Indigenous people -- from colonialism to slavery through food and housing redlining, mass incarceration, and surveillance.**

6. **To establish funding to ensure BIPOC, immigrant, disability, and LGBTQ+ organizations and artists can own and/or properly maintain their venues, buildings and/or land recognizing land stewardship and ownership as one of the most significant ways to address systemic inequitable distribution of resources;**

Arts and culture make up 7.5% of the NY State GDP, or $123.2 billion, representing 504,393 jobs with a **loss of $26.8 billion in revenue** due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, the NY State budget **did not mention arts and culture.** The average arts attendee spends approximately $31.47 beyond ticket costs on meals, retail, parking, lodging, local transportation, childcare, and souvenirs. These dollars provide vital income to small businesses such as local merchants, energize arts districts, foster a healthy residential real estate market, and pay salaries and wages in non-arts sectors. According to Brookings' *Lost art: Measuring COVID-19's devastating impact on America's creative economy* (https://www.brookings.edu/research/lost-art-measuring-covid-19s-devastating-impact-on-americas-creative-economy/), 58% of all creative workers in NY became unemployed (279,787 people) as of July 2020. Dance/NYC and its constituents believe that concrete action must be taken to support the arts and culture sector in recovery, as well as investing in the people, programs, and organizations that can lead the sector forward. Arts and culture drive the economy and can drive economic recovery forward.

Dance/NYC has been conducting comprehensive research on the impact of the coronavirus on the dance sector. In our recently published *Coronavirus Dance Impact Informational Brief* (https://bit.ly/DNYC_COVID_DanceImpactBrief) Dance/NYC found that 21% of African, Latina/o/x, Asian, Arab, and Native American (ALAANA) dance workers were unable to pay

rent/mortgage as compared to 15% of White (non-Hispanic) dance workers. 65% of disabled dance workers have not been able to access all of the medical and mental health resources they need as compared to 41% of non-disabled dance workers. 32% of immigrant dance workers need medical health care coverage as compared to 15% of those born in the US. In addition to these inequities, Dance/NYC has documented a mass exodus of the workforce out of the City with 5% of respondents permanently relocating outside of the City and an additional 17% considering relocation. Moreover, 43% of the respondents are considering long term career options outside of the field. Nearly half (47%) of the organizations surveyed are not certain that their organizations will be able to survive the pandemic and may be faced with closure. These data points highlight the ever-present inequities in the sector and that more work is needed to protect all dance workers to make sure they continue to thrive in our great City. Additionally it revealed that total revenue loss for dance organizations and groups exceeds $22M, including $16.5M in earned revenue and $5.5M in contributed revenue. Dance/NYC has already provided over $1 million in relief support to individual freelance dance workers and organizations through our *Coronavirus Dance Relief Fund* (www.dance.nyc/COVID-19/Relief-Fund/Overview), but this only alleviates the short-term needs; comprehensive access to capital legislation is desperately needed to ensure long term survival of the arts and culture sector.

The *Comptroller's Report on the Creative Economy* highlighted the vastness of the cultural sector with nearly 400,000 jobs. SMU DataArts and Department of Cultural Affairs' *COVID-19 Impact on Nonprofit Arts and Culture in New York City* report recently estimated an aggregate -$6.8 billion net effect of the COVID-19 crisis on the nonprofit arts and culture sector equates to a deficit equivalent to 26% of expenses for the average organization, over the course of a year. As found in Dance/NYC's *Defining "Small-Budget" Dance Makers in a Changing Dance Ecology* Report (https://www.dance.nyc/programs/research/2020/10/Defining-Small-Budget-Dance-Makers-in-a-

Changing-Dance-Ecology/), "Small-Budget" dance makes up the lion's share of the New York City dance sector. According to SMU Data Arts and the Department of Cultural Affairs' *COVID-19 Impact on Nonprofit Arts and Culture in New York City* report some of the greatest reductions to artist employment have come from Arts Education organizations, which collectively reported decreases of over 2,100 artists, or 78% of artist staffing, during this period. Small family run dance studios are key pipelines for the dance sector in addition to the department of education, professional programs, and Broadway and are facing closure. The exodus of the dance workforce and the permanent closures of organizations and groups poses a direct and pervasive threat to the survival of the arts and culture communities across the City— a loss we simply cannot afford.

The arts are necessary for community building and mental health, both of which are largely at risk due to social distancing measures. According to SMU Data Arts and DCLA, community-based arts organizations (especially those that focus on cultural and ethnic awareness, folk arts, and community celebrations) in the City have reported losses of 12%, unanticipated expenses of 12%, and have the lowest level of Working Capital relative to expenses at 1.6 months heading into the crisis. A lack of access to dance due to the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted individuals and communities across New York City. Students and children have been unable to go to dance studios and senior centers have lost in-person programming with dance organizations. Virtual dance has stepped up to fill the gaps but **for a fraction of the revenue**. Lack of relief funding has left dance makers and artists more vulnerable than ever. While the Payment Protection Program (PPP), EIDL and other government loans were provided at the start of the pandemic, this money has quickly run out. In Dance/NYC's Coronavirus Dance Impact Survey, one organization shared, "We're deeply concerned with the health crisis (physical and mental), loss of jobs and food security for people living in our community who were already vulnerable before COVID-19. Our programs have always served

as a place of solace as the arts offer spaces for people to heal and seek solutions. It is important that we exist to help people weather the crisis psychologically and compliment organizations who are offering social services for displacement, health care, and food."

Defunding the police and funding social services, passing housing and healthcare reform, and ensuring Black and POC- led organizations continue to thrive are all important for the survival of artists, arts workers, the cultural life of NYC and are steps towards the envisioning of what anti-racist systemic reform could look like. White supremacy continuously manifests itself in violence at the hands of law enforcement and in interpersonal interactions, our government's response to COVID-19, and our cultural institutions. A step towards reparations is defunding the police by $1 billion and funding equitable opportunities aimed at creating accountability and dismantling white supremacy in arts and culture and amplifying the voices and autonomy of the Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) community. There is no going back to life pre-COVID. We all hold a responsibility to dismantle white supremacy in all the ways it manifests at our cultural institutions, policies, funding, and interpersonal interactions and envisioning justice. We are in a crisis and need continued support now.

**For Dance/NYC and its constituents, the most urgent priorities are:**

1. **The City implements the Cultural Plan for Recover (CPR), which equitably invests 70 million dollars in the arts and cultural sector to best reach those people, programs, and organizations who need support and can lead the sector forward;**
2. **The City to establish an artist registry to be used as a mechanism to communicate with, collect data from, and support art workers going forward;**
3. **The City to revise and extend the NYC Artists Corps to create ongoing workforce support for art workers;**

4. **The Committee include the Arts and Culture communities in their economic support and relief plans and pass legislation to protect our organizations and workers;**
5. **The Committee acknowledge the ongoing lasting impacts of slavery, establish and execute a plan to address those impacts, and repair the harm done by immediately establishing a Commission for Reparations for past and continuing harms inflicted upon Black and Indigenous people -- from colonialism to slavery through food and housing redlining, mass incarceration, and surveillance; and**
6. **To establish funding to ensure BIPOC, immigrant, disability, and LGBTQ+ organizations and artists can own and/or properly maintain their venues, buildings and/or land recognizing land stewardship and ownership as one of the most significant ways to address systemic inequitable distribution of resources.**

We commend New York City's ongoing efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19, while safely reopening the City. Dance/NYC strongly advocates for a vision rooted in inclusivity, equity, and sustainability for the arts and culture industry. Artists are necessary workers and need to be treated as dignified labor in order to continue to be a driving part of the NYC workforce and help arts and culture to lead recovery efforts. Funding is desperately needed in order to not lose our most vulnerable organizations and workers and to ensure they continue to thrive here. The time to act is now.

##

Dancewave
Celebrating 25 Years

**New York City Council Committee on Finance**
**Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget Hearings Testimony**
**May 25, 2021**

Majority Leader Cumbo, Chairperson Dromm and Members of the Committee, thank you for your time and for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of New York City's vibrant arts and cultural sector.

For twenty six years, Dancewave has been an integral part of the NYC arts and culture community. Each year, we serve over 6,000 New Yorkers through access to high-quality dance education, whole-person development support and opportunities to celebrate our city's unparalleled cultural diversity. Like many other nonprofit arts organizations, Dancewave relies on the investment and support of our city's leaders to provide free and equitable access to arts and cultural programming.

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, Dancewave remained (and remains) committed to ensuring uninterrupted access to the many important services we provide the NYC community, despite facing a near-60% loss in revenue, including a full elimination of SU-CASA funding to serve our city's seniors. Despite these tremendous setbacks, within the last 9 months alone we delivered by:

- Connecting high school seniors with over $3M in college scholarships through our annual Dancewave Through College and Beyond career preparatory and college fair event.
- Providing over 1,500 hours of virtual dance instruction to several hundred youth in NYC public schools. Important note: *This is a 50% reduction in services due to funding cuts.*
- Welcoming our city's artists into our doors for over 200 socially-distanced rehearsals and virtual performances.

Dancewave is an essential thread in the fabric of our arts community, providing innumerable and holistic benefits to our city's most vulnerable and underserved communities. The proposed $20M cut in DCLA funding will hurt not only Dancewave, but the many organizations who so thoughtfully and consistently provide access to the arts and cultural experiences that NYC is known for. Now, more than ever, we cannot afford to divest funds from the arts and cultural providers that employ 400,000 people, generate $110B in economic activity for the city and whose workers are facing a two-thirds loss of employment sector-wide.

There is no recovery without the arts, and the Cultural Plan for Recovery (CPR) ensures the city invests in an equitable way to help lead the sector forward. Dancewave supports the recommendations outlined in the CPR by New Yorkers for Culture and Arts, and asks that The New York City Council fully and wholeheartedly advocate for this essential funding necessary for our city's recovery.

Thank you,
Nicole Touzien, Executive Director

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Founded in 1995 by Diane Jacobowitz

# THE PARTNERSHIP FOR THE HOMELESS

**Fiscal 2022 Executive Budget Hearing of the City Council Committee on Finance - 5/25/21**
**testimony@council.nyc.gov**

Day of testimony from -
The Partnership for the Homeless

Hello - I'm Danielle Mowery from The Partnership for the Homeless. Hope everyone is doing well!

First, I'd like to thank you for considering our funding request for 160K to keep NYers safely housed.

How do we do this? The Partnership is focused on Prevention. Prevention entails a range of areas and service to support people and ensure long-term stability. We address our programs and impact in more detail in our brief - and thank you to those who we had a chance to speak with prior to this hearing. For this short conversation. I'll keep it focused on one component - Rental Assistance.

We work with our clients to pay their rental arrears. We work with landlords, especially small landlords, to negotiate amounts to pay and to arrange logistics. We stabilize both the tenant and the landlords this way - and help keep our city's housing ecosystem whole. Small landlords are a strong source of affordable housing - and our city needs them to come out of this crisis intact.

We also need the many, many NYers who are facing eviction to stay safely housed. Who are our clients? Lower income NYers, rent-burdened, women of color, women with young children, undocumented and people who don't qualify for federal aids, families.

With the pandemic, we are seeing more clients, more people in economic distress, and much higher amounts of rent due. Still, the amount that it takes to prevent eviction - approximately $4,000 - is so much less of cost than the nearly 70K it takes to keep a family in shelter.

Money, of course, is not the only cost here. Eviction, homelessness, housing instability - this is trauma, often trauma that people never fully recover from. And this trauma, ultimately, hurts all of us as we see families suffer, communities fray, children lose connections to their friends, their education.

**Which is why we believe the best way to solve homelessness is to prevent it. And we appreciate your support.**

In closing, I'd also like to say that we join with Advocates for Children and many other orgs in their urgent request for the DOE to hire 150 shelter-based community coordinators to help students in shelter.

THE PARTNERSHIP FOR THE HOMELESS

(Losing your home is stressful. School this year - stressful. Our NYC children in shelter have dealt with enough - they are vulnerable and they are reliant on us, as a city, to look out for them.)

This is a key issue for The Partnership because children in shelter missing school feeds intergenerational homelessness - helping children now is a key part of long term prevention and secures a better future for them.

And ultimately, securing a better future for NYers is the goal of all the work we all do.

Thank you.

Danielle Mowery
dmowery@pfth.org

# THE PARTNERSHIP FOR THE HOMELESS

**The Partnership for the Homeless & the New York City Council**
**Rental Assistance/Eviction Prevention Funding Request**

**Request:** The Partnership is requesting $160,000 to expand our current eviction prevention services, which include financial assistance, landlord mediation, legal services and tenant education and advocacy. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we've increased our support for tenants with emergency financial assistance to generate immediate safety for our families and help cover rent and utility arrears that have been building since the shutdown in March 2020.

**Program Overview & Increasing Need:** When the COVID-19 related shutdown began, The Partnership launched its COVID-19 rental assistance efforts immediately. We knew that a shutdown of this magnitude would require a large-scale eviction prevention effort; otherwise, lost jobs, long-term illness and a high death rate would lead to a domino effect resulting in massive evictions the likes of which our city has not seen.

Early on, it became clear that the pandemic was having a disproportionate impact on individuals represented among our client base – Black and Latinx communities, low-wage workers and people spending at least 30%-50% of their income on housing. The NYS eviction moratorium, without true rent assistance, is only a stopgap measure for renters.

Through our program, we intervene to help clients reach zero rental arrears in three primary ways: (1) offer emergency assistance for rent and utility arrears, (2) conduct comprehensive benefits analysis and connect clients to all available supports through government and community partners and (3) initiate intensive landlord mediation to negotiate a reduction in the amount owed and to alert landlords that clients have advocates working to keep them safely housed.

There is no better ROI than eviction prevention. The roughly $68,000 it costs to keep a family with children in the shelter system is more than 3x the cost of keeping a family in their apartment with a monthly rent of $1,700, or $20,000 annually. It is the solution that keeps individuals and families in their homes, saves lives, and reduces costs. It provides not just immediate relief, but also sets our clients up for long-term success and stability. The Partnership's financial assistance and mediation make families 76% more likely to remain housed long-term. Through our work to keep families in their homes, we are not only maximizing each dollar, but also we are giving families the best chance at lasting stabilization.

**Our Clients:** We support households through this program whose incomes fall below 50% of area median income (AMI), with more than three-quarters of our clients living on incomes that fall below 30% of AMI.

# THE PARTNERSHIP FOR THE HOMELESS

We serve communities – such as Hunts Point, Mott Haven, Brownsville and East New York – with the highest rates of poverty, homelessness, unemployment and health disparities. Our clients are among the most vulnerable, including LGBTQIA+ people, those living with HIV and AIDS, the elderly, undocumented families, those who have experienced domestic violence, and those living with a range of medical and mental health concerns. In the communities we serve, 80% of households that are severely rent burdened are also extremely low income or very low-income. Up to 45% of residents spent over 50% of their annual income on rent (compared to 27% in all of NYC). In a recent community survey, 75% of households in some of the city's poorest neighborhoods reported having $1,000 or less in savings. Of those households, 33% reported $0 in savings.

Another key demographic that we have been working with throughout the pandemic are undocumented renters. We have seen increased requests from undocumented clients, particularly those who have received no assistance from various stimulus packages – including the one-time federal payments, unemployment benefits, and NY State's Rental Assistance Program. As a result, undocumented clients present with higher arrears, and report that they are experiencing greater pressure and harassment from landlords. Our landlord mediation efforts have been particularly effective for these clients.

**Projected Impact:** With the support of the NYC Council and other funders, The Partnership will be able to provide assistance to approximately 700 households (approximately 1,750 New Yorkers) across the five boroughs. The average assistance amount needed for each household has nearly doubled from this time last year - and clients' arrears are increasing each month, their benefits are running out, and many still remain out of work and/or are ineligible for various stimulus supports or assistance from other organizations. The 160K additional funding from City Council will help us to target the most vulnerable renters and offer assistance to help build a bridge to keep families afloat and help landlords - who are themselves struggling to collect rent - to keep their buildings.

**Additional Impact: Ecosystem of Small Landlords** Our work has focused on New York City as an ecosystem. When renters are able to pay down their arrears, it benefits them and their families directly – and it also benefits the landlords (especially small landlords) who depend on their rents to pay their mortgages and maintain their buildings. If the real estate ecosystem is healthy, New York City as a whole is healthy. Our program provides funds quickly to landlords - who are themselves often struggling to collect rent and pay bills - allowing them to retain and maintain their buildings.

**FY20 Impact:** In FY20, more than 50,000 New Yorkers were reached by The Partnership's housing, crisis and emergency services, and health and education programs. By creating partnerships with every sector — philanthropy, business, government, nonprofits and the arts — we have generated substantial impact: 8,000 New Yorkers received housing and emergency services to stave off evictions and secure their existing homes; 6,500 New Yorkers received ongoing stabilizing clinical casework and mental health and emotional wellbeing interventions; 40,000+ children and parents in the family shelter system benefitted from our schools access advocacy, and 35,000 meals were provided to families in need.

**Testimony of Henry Garrido, Executive Director, District Council 37**
**Before the City Council Committee on Finance**
**FY 2022 Executive Budget**
**May 25, 2021**

Good morning. My name is Henry Garrido. I'm the Executive Director of District Council 37, New York City's largest municipal employee union, with over 150,000 members and 50,000 retirees. Thank you for having me here today. I appear (virtually) before you to testify regarding the Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget.

District Council 37 represents the workers we've spent the last year calling "essential." Our school lunch workers worked through school holidays to continue delivering food for families in need; our EMTs raced to every part of this city to deliver people to care; our H+H social workers helped countless grieving families. For the most part, they have reported to work as normal every day of this pandemic without question or complaint. They are the heroes who have kept this city running.

Even though the fiscal outlook is much better for the FY 22 Executive Budget compared to the Preliminary Budget, there still remains some areas that need to be addressed.

I'd like to specifically focus on five areas of critical importance, both to DC 37 and to the overall recovery effort of this city: 1) our city's public hospitals; 2) libraries; 3) cultural institutions; 4) year round child care for families, and 5) parks.

I'll begin with Health + Hospitals. No hospital system has shouldered more of the burden throughout this pandemic than Health + Hospitals. Our public sector health professionals have given all they have to treat New Yorkers and keep our healthcare system afloat.

This year's state budget saw the proposed threat of an across the board cut to Medicaid providers of 1 percent. This cut could have hurt safety net providers disproportionately because they serve mostly lower-income communities more reliant on Medicaid. We already know that approximately 70 percent of H+H's patients are on Medicaid or uninsured.

We have seen with our very own eyes what happens when we don't invest in the health of our communities. Last year, lower-income New Yorkers were

disproportionately hurt by COVID-19 because of decades of institutional neglect when it came to their health. We cannot allow this problem to get worse. There is nothing more shameful than leaving our hospitals underfunded and stretched too thin.

Additionally, DC 37 represents revenue-generating titles such as Hospital Care Investigators and City Assessors. These positions – and the funding they bring in – are integral to building back New York City. We must be looking for more positions like these and not only maintaining the current headcount, but increasing it. Supporting our workforce and helping New Yorkers find employment is not only a moral imperative, it's a smart business decision for the City.

Next I'll discuss libraries, which we all know are central to the fabric of this city. Libraries are places our children can spend their afternoons safely, they provide resources to students and the elderly alike, and most recently, they've been used to provide food to families in need and help get New Yorkers vaccinated.

Despite the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, the city's three library systems are still facing significant reductions to their operating aid. Unfortunately, the FY 22 Executive Budget cuts funding for New York City libraries by $10.3m, which does not include the loss of $11.9m in City Council non-baselined funds that was added in FY 21. **The proposed cut, combined with the potential loss of City Council funding, totals $22.2m** (on top of the $4.3m cut from this fiscal year) could severely impact library services by leaving staff positions unfilled and reducing service levels at such a crucial time. We cannot continue to pull resources from our library buildings and workers with one hand, and reduce their resources and support with the other.

Recently, 53 neighborhood libraries across the city began offering expanded services, enabling customers to browse collections, computer access, and in-person reference services. Within the next several weeks, additional libraries that currently only offer "to-go" or "grab-and-go" service will begin providing these expanded services as well, while libraries that have remained closed will start to reopen. The remaining branches are scheduled to be reopened sometime in July to the public. Libraries are the great equalizer. Whether you're rich or poor, the services are available to all. That's what we need as we rebuild our City.

Now I turn to the city's cultural institutions. Institutions like the Natural History Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art are as iconic and tied to New York City as the Empire State Building. In addition to those universally known, we have

jewels throughout the five boroughs and their contributions to this city make New York what it is.

Our cultural institutions are hurting. The Met previously laid off 132 members at the end of February. The American Museum of Natural History laid off and furloughed more than a third of our members starting in June 2020. Some of the City's smaller institutions laid off their entire staff and have only been able to return 1 or 2 members thus far, if that. The Botanic Gardens in Brooklyn and Queens had various cost saving measures, such as reduced hours. As tourists return, the administration needs to invest in these institutions that suffered so much during the pandemic in order to keep our treasured museums and cultural institutions alive.

As the city begins to re-open, I would like to mention the need for year round child care for families. Mayor de Blasio's Executive Budget expands 3-K for All by 16,500 seats but makes no significant increase in Full-Day/Year-Round Programs that serve infants and toddlers, as well as provide a full day of care and summer services for three and four-year old children. Furthermore, due to a rebidding of slots, many longstanding community based organizations, which primarily serve low-income communities and communities of color are now set to only provide school-day/school-year programs, a significant barrier to accessing child care for working families.

In the most recent data available for NYC pre-K, only 16% of all four-year-olds received full-day/year-round care while the remaining 84% were in school day/year programs. Meanwhile, many family child care providers who provide full-day care and the bulk of care for the youngest children, were recently awarded DOE contracts for only school-day care for three year-olds.

In the City's Council response to the Mayor's FY 22 Preliminary Budget, they called on the administration to invest $45 million "to ensure that full time, year-round childcare is available to families who need it the most." We support this recommendation whole heartedly.
Furthermore, in order to ensure that child care and preschool is available for working families, the administration needs to make the following investments:

- $10 million for approximately 1000 new full-day family child care slot for infants and toddlers.
- $17.5 million to convert over 2,000 school-day/school-year slots for 3 and 4-year old children to full-day/year-round slots.

- $17.5 million to expand center-based infant toddler capacity by approximately 700 slots.

Last, but not least, I'd like to spend some time discussing our city's parks. Another place where our workforce helps generate much needed revenue.

It is good news to hear the administration has committed to restoring cleaning and maintenance staff for FY 22, dedicating 2500 members of the City's Clean Up Corps to Parks, as well as hiring the full complement of seasonal workers. Last year demonstrated how important the work performed by the cleaning, maintenance, and seasonal staff is to the daily upkeep of parks.

While there is some good news for Parks, the FY 22 Executive Budget does not restore $3 million for 50 Urban Park Ranger positions, as well as $6 million to restore 80 Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) Officers – both added in the FY 20 budget, but not baselined and not included in the FY 22 Executive Budget. The PEP officers provide safety and security in our parks, as well as generate revenue for the city by issuing fines. During the height of the pandemic at a time when park use was at a record level high, the city chose not to restore PEP officers. As is, there aren't enough PEP officers to patrol the thousands of acres of city parkland. We need more PEP officers, not less.

Furthermore, the 100 City Park Workers (CPWs) and 50 Gardeners added by the Council in FY 20, need to be restored and baselined in FY 22.
Our parks are where our children play and elderly relax. These open park spaces must be maintained and kept safe. We've already seen what happens when hires don't happen as they should. We cannot repeat the mistakes of the past.

Let me conclude my remarks by acknowledging once again the unbelievable work of the brothers and sisters of DC 37 this past year. We asked them every day to show up and do their jobs, as though the world hadn't changed around them. Selflessly, they did, and far too many were lost to COVID-19. I appear before you today to remind you of their sacrifice and ask that we honor these workers by providing the support they deserve, not cuts that make their jobs harder. District Council 37 is always ready to offer constructive suggestions on how the City can balance their budget and still serve New Yorkers.

Thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer your questions.

DOCTORS DC COUNCIL
a national affiliate of SEIU

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**Doctors Council SEIU**
**Testimony Before the New York City Council**
**Budget Hearing for Fiscal Year 2022**

**May 25, 2021**

**Delivered by: Devon Gilliams**
**On behalf of Frank Proscia, M.D., President & Kevin Collins, Executive Director**

Good afternoon Council Member Dromm and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Doctors Council SEIU, a united voice for doctors, our patients, and the communities we serve, is a national affiliate of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and we are a union representing thousands of doctors in employed practice in New York State and other cities and states. This includes the doctors of New York City Health + Hospitals (H+H), the largest public hospital system in the nation, mayoral agencies such as the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Education, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner as well as in correctional facilities such as Rikers Island. * (See end for more about us.)

We believe in quality, affordable, and safe health care as a basic human right and social good, achieved and accessible by all, regardless of insurance, economic status, ability to pay, race, ethnicity, citizenship or residency status, language spoken, or diagnosis.

We strive to ensure that doctors' work environments are such that our hospitals and facilities can recruit and retain staff and that we can practice medicine and dentistry in a manner that we believe in, is ethical and can take pride in.

Our members put their lives on the line during the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to do so, often leaving their families behind to care for the most vulnerable and sick patients and to manage and respond to this disease. Doctors are essential workers who chronically worked short-staffed and burned out on the frontlines in the hardest hit areas of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When COVID-19 first hit New York City in 2020, at Doctors Council SEIU we created a 24/7 hotline for our members to call, text or email us anytime. In all our decades of representing doctors, we have never seen anything like what occurred. We had doctors calling us telling us that they said goodbye to their families not just because they might be staying away from their homes for weeks but because they might not survive to go back home. We had family members who were not members of our union calling and crying and you could feel the palpable fear over the phone. We had doctors being sprayed from an intubation procedure of a COVID-19 patient, doctors dealing with too few and hard to obtain N-95 masks and PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), doctor moms with newborns struggling to combine going to work with

child care which became nonexistent at the height of the pandemic, to patients running out of beds, ventilators and medications, and on and on.

We honor our doctor heroes while remembering the patients we cared for and those whose lives were lost.

Through all this, our members and the other health care worker heroes of New York City, bonded and stood united together to treat everyone, and by being stronger together saved so many New Yorkers.

All of our members have kept and do keep every day New York City going. Our H+H doctors are there for our patients. Our members in the DOHMH and DOE are there for the New York City school children across the 5 boroughs. Our doctors in correctional facilities give compassionate care to detainees.

We call on the Mayor and the City Council to recognize our challenges and continue to strengthen funding to Health + Hospitals and the mayoral agencies as we continue dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. Our patients and communities need your support. As do the doctors.

Doctors Council SEIU has worked with our international union on advocacy on the federal level. We are glad that Congress passed and President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. We thank U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, our very own New York Senator, for his leadership in getting this done. The billions in direct local aid slated for New York City will help us to finally overcome the massive revenue loss. New York State is getting desperately needed funds of $12.5 billion to close the budget deficit.

We worked hard, along with our health care unions and community groups and allies, to advocate against possible State cuts that could have been millions of dollars. Cutting resources in the middle of a pandemic from H+H and other public services which have led the fight to save lives and protect New Yorkers from COVID-19 is simply wrong and beyond comprehension.

We met with members of the State Assembly and Senate to advocate that funding not be cut to New York City public services and patient care, whether to H+H, safety-net facilities or Mayoral Agencies, such as the DOHMH or DOE.

We are working to ensure there are no closures of public safety net facilities, as well as no cuts, reductions in services or layoffs.

As we have for numerous years, along with other unions and community groups, we continue to advocate for the State to change its formula for Disproportionate Share Hospitals (DSH) payments. Under the State's DSH distribution formula, H+H is the last payee in the system, receiving only the balance left after all other DSH-eligible hospitals are paid. This is despite H+H being a true safety-net provider and providing more uncompensated care for Medicaid and uninsured patients.

The City budget problems need to be addressed but not on the backs of those who work for the City and those who have given and continue to give so much to deal with the Coronavirus pandemic. We believe laying off workers or seeking concessions will add to the problem and not fix it and will hurt New York City communities and residents as well as those who lose their job. Laying off workers will only add to the unemployment rate and drastically reduce the services we provide to people 24/7 every day. The loss of workers that provide essential services will not put us in the best position to continue to fight against the pandemic and be prepared to handle a next surge.

While we realize that New York State and New York City may face severe budget issues in the future due to the enduring economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, laying off workers or demanding concessions will not solve the problem.

Additionally, we support the following health and safety measures:

- ✓ Granting employees including doctors time off to receive vaccinations.
- ✓ Ensuring adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including N95 respirators and surgical masks, for doctors and other healthcare workers.
- ✓ Maintaining the highest possible level of mandatory infection control measures to protect health workers including doctors. We must not lower infection disease protocols, such as when and how long it is appropriate to wear an N-95 mask, and even if the CDC or the State lowers protocols it does not mean that the City or H+H needs to weaken its infectious disease protocols.

Doctors Council SEIU continues to support efforts on mask wearing, social distancing and hand washing. On vaccinations, we must continue and increase our efforts, especially working to understand and address how communities of color have been historically effected by institutional racism and how this can result in distrust of vaccination efforts. We must ensure culturally competent care.

We must ensure that the communities of color that were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 receive the resources and care needed.

We must act quickly and decisively to reverse the long trend of austerity which has affected the strength and efficacy of our healthcare system. This means working to address the harmful practice of hospital closures and consolidation which has lead to the creation of healthcare deserts in low income, communities of color. We are currently seeing this conversation play out as we address the realities of hospital closures in New York City.

As we move forward through the pandemic, we must be mindful of and fund new or emerging pathways to administer care or amplify and enlarge existing ones. For example, virtual telehealth visits can greatly expand care and enable a doctor to work remotely. We must ensure that our patients and communities have access to the internet and computers in order to access telehealth while at the same time listening to the input of the frontline doctors as to what works and what does not.

We must continue and increase funding H+H and the mayoral agencies to enable the retention of the doctors we have and recruiting new doctors. We must have enough doctors to ensure safe staffing as well as the timely availability of care and services.

We need to fund mental health services for health care workers who worked during the COVID-19 pandemic. What they experienced and saw will stay with them for the rest of their lives and some will have PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder).

It is often said that a budget shows priorities. It is important to us as doctors that our patients receive quality health care when they are in front of us. It is also important that the inequities and social determinants of care that impact so many communities in New York are addressed. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the structural problems of New York City and as we move forward we should not go back to the way things were, because that was not working, but rather we must implement a new normal for New York City, one in which all people have a right to access quality health care.

We implore the City Council and Mayor to continue to fund and strengthen NYC Health + Hospitals and all the mayoral agencies as we continue dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. Our patients and communities deserve this, as do the doctors who worked through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

* More About Doctors Council SEIU

We are a union representing thousands of doctors in employed practice in New York State and other cities and states, including the doctors of New York City Health + Hospitals (H+H). NYC H+H is the largest public hospital system in the nation.

Doctors Council SEIU also represents doctors in the New York City mayoral agencies including the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), Department of Education (DOE) as well as doctors working at Rikers Island, the largest correctional facility in the nation.

Other agencies include Corrections, Fire, Police, Sanitation, Human Resources Administration, and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

The work that our members do 24/7 helps the communities and residents of New York City every day. The services we provide across the five boroughs of New York City are vital, numerous and far reaching, ranging from managing and responding to the Coronavirus pandemic, to seeing patients in hospitals and clinics, to doctors in schools, to visiting patients at home, to providing services for those throughout the tri-state region with World Trade Center issues, to work in the Medical Examiners Office, to work in corrections/fire/ police and sanitation, and so much more.

# 5.25.2021 NYC Council Budget Hearing Testimony
**By Boris Santos**

## Introduction

Greetings to the Chair and all Council Members. My name is Boris Santos, and I am the Treasurer of the East New York Community Land Trust (CLT). I come before you to give testimony and urge the Council to fund the Community Land Trust Initiative to the degree of $1.5M for FY22 and to demand that the City give an update to Community Board 5 or the ENY community at large as it relates to the status of the commitments made to the community through the April 2016 approved rezoning.

## Community Land Trust Initiative Funding

I want to begin by first thanking this City Council for being the first to recognize the need for funding (specifically discretionary) to help build, grow, and expand the CLT movement. From this goal and proposition was the CLT Initiative funding borne out of. First funded in FY20 for a total of an estimated $850K, the funding dipped a bit to $650K in the following FY21 but it is important to note that funding remained through dire fiscal circumstances as our City was ravaged by the Covid-19 pandemic. Yes, funding remained as the Council, "looked through each budget line" thoroughly, and asked, "Is this essential for our social safety net?" That, in the words of Speaker Corey Johnson during last year's budget. So, it would follow that this initiative must be funded this upcoming fiscal year, and at a time when we are working towards our recovery as the City's coffers look somewhat decent (particularly because of financial support from the federal government) we must further show how important this initiative is by bolstering this funding at least to the level of $1.5M.

CLT's such as mine have relied on this funding to continue the public outreach and education as it pertains to the CLT model, to building plans to acquiring land and maximizing it as a public good, and to actually executing those plans. Let's show how committed we are to CLT's, their expansion, and the inclusive and democratic processes they bring to land acquisition and development by funding them $1.5M.

## ENY Rezoning Commitments Update and Further Transparency

I want to end by making one simple but necessary demand. Since the rezoning of ENY in April 2016, our community has yet to receive an update beyond the one last made in the City's rezoning tracker with regards to its commitments. We're talking about our community not getting a progress report for about 3 years. And what this has caused is people organizing on the ground, to make demands about money that the City has already committed and allocated to ENY. Recent reports show this. Our community deserves full, consistent, and transparent

reporting with regards to the finalization of the work done after the funding streams were allocated. I repeat, the city must be able to report to the Community Board – at least – to give a clear and documented progress of the ENY rezoning commitments. I look forward to that happening immediately after the Summer and before this Mayor leaves Gracie Mansion. I am willing to work with my Council Member to make that happen as well. Thank you.

The Education Trust–New York

**Presented before the New York City Council**
**Committees on Education and Finance**
**Re: Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget – Education**
**May 25, 2021**

*The Education Trust–New York is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to educational equity. We work to attain educational justice through policy and advocacy that results in all students – and especially those who are low-income or students of color – achieving at high levels from early childhood through college completion.*

The Education Trust–New York appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony to New York City Council's Committees on Education and Finance for the Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget.

The Department of Education's Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget includes unprecedented funding, including 100% Fair Student Funding for all schools and federal funding through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. This historic funding provides an opportunity for the Department to address longstanding educational inequities in our education system that have been significantly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is imperative that the city adopts and implements an equity driven agenda centered on providing comprehensive academic and social emotional supports to all students, especially students historically underserved by the education system – students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, multilingual learners and other special populations.

As New York City works to recover from the detrimental impact the pandemic has had on our education system, we urge the city to prioritize the following areas for this upcoming budget.

**<u>Invest city resources to help address pre-existing inequities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic</u>**

- **Expand Community Schools Models** as the model has been proven to correlate positively with students' academic outcomes. The availability of wrap-around services like vision care, free glasses, medical care, dental care, mental health counselors, and tutoring that are in community schools are needed now more than ever.
- **Increase access to and the quality of early childhood education programs** especially for students of color and students with disabilities. This includes equitable salaries for pre-school teachers and pre-school programs operated by community-based organizations.
- **Expand integration/desegregation programming** by leveraging the work of districts that have implemented integration pilot programs to desegregate schools across the city. Ensure that participating community school districts prioritize inclusivity by adopting culturally responsive and sustaining and anti-racist practices.
- **Invest in critical academic supports**, such as evidence-based, targeted, intensive tutoring programs – extended and out-of-school learning opportunities – especially for students who were the most reliant on remote and hybrid learning models during the pandemic.

- **Support students with unique needs**, including students experiencing homelessness, students in foster care, students with disabilities, and Multilingual learners.
- **Address the digital divide** and work to ensure that all students have access to working devices that can be used for learning.

**Invest in a teacher and counselor workforce that is well-prepared and supported**

- **Invest in equity-focused, effective instructional leadership that is culturally responsive and sustaining** by implementing a holistic, culturally relevant, standard-aligned curriculum; providing all educators with professional learning content that will support students' cognitive, academic, and socio-emotional development; and creating opportunities for educators to learn inclusive pedagogical methods that are anchored in anti-racism and celebrate students' identities.
- **Significantly increase the number of school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and grief counselors proportionate to student population need**, particularly for students who have experienced significant trauma during the course of the pandemic.
- **Expand initiatives that promote educator diversity and retention** by investing in educator diversity pipelines and supporting the retention and promotion of current educators of color.

**Improve college and career readiness**

- **Invest in programs that support high school seniors' access to high-quality postsecondary transition planning** that aligns a student's aspirations, experiences, and skills to their desired postsecondary path and to the resources and supports that are available in these unique circumstances.
- **Improve equitable access to advanced coursework** and ensure that students, especially students of color and students from low-income backgrounds, have access to rigorous, high-quality coursework with appropriate support. To achieve inclusiveness, schools should be encouraged to adopt a standard-based curriculum that is culturally relevant and sustaining.

Thank you for providing an opportunity to testify. We look forward to working with the City Council, the Department of Education, students, parents, teachers and other education stakeholders to help provide a more equitable education to all New York City students.

Please contact Dia Bryant, Interim Executive Director, The Education Trust–New York, at dbryant@edtrustny.org with any questions regarding this testimony.

**Testimony**
**New York City Council**
**Committee on Finance and Committee on Education**
**Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget**
**May 25, 2021**

Chair Dromm and Chair Treyger:

My name is Wendy Lecker and I am a Senior Attorney at Education Law Center. ELC is the nation's legal defense fund for public education rights and, since 2011, has worked to advance the right of all children to a sound basic education as guaranteed by the New York Constitution and as effectuated by the landmark Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) ruling. Prior to joining ELC, I served on the legal team that litigated the CFE case.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to your committees on the crucial issue of reducting excessive class size in New York City (NYC or City) public schools.

We commend the City Council for proposing, in its Response to the FY2022 Preliminary Budget, a $250 million allocation targeted to reducing class size in NYC public schools. We urge the City Council to ensure that this proposal be included in the final negotiated budget, and that it be structured as a separate allocation, so that students are provided a resource essential to a meaningful opportunity for a sound basic education: small class size. We also urge the City Council attach a public reporting requirement to this allocation, in order to hold the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) accountable, to the City Council and the public, for spending the funds on the purpose for which it is allocated.

Smaller class size is among the most effective tools for improving education outcomes, especially for students from low-income families, students with special needs and students of color. In 2003, New York's highest court recognized the importance of reasonable class sizes in its CFE ruling. The Court of Appeals found that tens of thousands of City school children were consigned to excessively large classes, a "systemic failure" in providing a "sound basic education.

Almost two decades later, City school children remain consigned to the same excessively large class sizes the Court of Appeals found unconstitutional. Data from 2019 shows over thirty-five thousand (35,000) first through third graders were assigned to classes of 30 or more, a nearly 3,000% increase since 2007. In total, almost 300,000 students were in classes of 30 or more as of October 2019.

In 2007, the Legislature enacted the Contract for Excellence Law (C4E) mandating NYC DOE to reduce these extreme class sizes. In 2008, the agency committed to a plan to reduce class sizes within five years – or by 2012 – in three grade spans. Under that plan, class size averages in Kindergarten through third grade were to be lowered to no more than 20 students, to 23 students

in grades 4-8, and 25 students in core high school classes. Unfortunately, the NYC DOE failed to fulfill this plan and, as a result, class size averages in all grade spans have increased since 2007: 14% in Kindergarten through third grade, 14.6% in 4th-8th grade, and 2% in high school.

It is well past time for NYC DOE to reduce the excessive class sizes in its schools. Allocating $250 million specifically for this purpose is an important first step in achieveing this goal. However, owing to the NYC DOE's past failure to adhere to the its commitment to reduce class size, we urge the City Council to also impose reporting requirements. We submit that the NYC DOE post the reports publicly so that students, parents and community members can track the expenditure of this allocation.

These requirements will ensure that the funding allocated will actually be spent to hire the classroom teachers necessary to reduce class size. We urge the City Council to seize this unique opportunity to provide this vital educational resource proven to make a difference in the education and lives of students, particularly our most vulnerable students.

Thank you.

My name is Ray Knights, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Elmy's Special Services, Inc (ESS).

Elmy's Special Services was established in 2002 believing that every person, at every age and level of ability, has growth potential. We believe that they deserve to receive services in their community regardless of race, creed, or sexual orientation and that each of them is entitled to the same dignity, respect, and opportunities as all other members of society.

Elmy's is pleased to report that since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, our staff worked non-stop to meet the needs of the individuals that we service. Our agency has moved onward and upward rather rapidly, developing safety polices and enhancing trainings. We have adapted to procedures in accordance with CDC guidelines and industry best practices to enhance our current stringent disinfection.

As a frontline provider for individuals diagnosed with disabilities in underserved communities, we can attest to the fact that governmental funding is necessary for Elmy's to meet its mission mandate. Persons of color with disabilities have been among the hardest hit from the COVID-19 pandemic. They have suffered the most adverse effects which include the highest rates of mortality, joblessness, and home displacement. The Central Brooklyn community

is in dire need of more services for its residents diagnosed with disabilities. Other, more affluent communities have had access to Day Habilitation Centers for decades while the communities that we service have lacked them.

Elmy's has worked to correct this injustice by constructing a Day Habilitation Center in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn, New York. This program is crucial to meeting the needs of the more than 300 individuals in Bedford Stuyvesant diagnosed with disabilities. The Day Habilitation Center provides individuals with a state of art gym, library, computer room, arts and crafts room, game room, bathrooms with showers and hoya lifts, fully functional kitchen, and stage for performances. Individuals diagnosed with disabilities will be able to utilize these amenities, which will help them build rewarding, satisfying relationships within their communities.

The new Day Habilitation Center utilizes Elmy's person-centered, less restrictive philosophy allowing individuals to develop necessary skills and pursue their goals and interests. Elmy's requests an allocation of **$100,000** to outfit the Day Habilitation Center with new computers, arts and crafts, materials, books and games and furniture for the more than 300 individuals in Central Brooklyn.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a wake-up call for Elmy's reminding us that we must continue our work towards achieving equality for all. The fact that communities of color and people with disabilities suffered disproportionally is a stain on our country that we must correct. Proper governmental investment into providing services that help such vulnerable populations will help us achieve more equality.

**Testimony of Lorraine Y. Collins**
**Senior Director for Public Policy and External Affairs**
**Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.**

**To the New York City Council**
**Committee on Finance**

**Hearing on the FY 2022 Executive Budget**
**May 25, 2021**

My name is Lorraine Collins, and I am the Senior Director for Public Policy and External Affairs for the New York office of Enterprise Community Partners, a national affordable housing non-profit whose mission is to make home and community places of pride, power and belonging, and platforms for resilience and upward mobility for all. We invest capital to create and preserve quality affordable homes, reinvest revenues to develop programmatic solutions, and scale these solutions through policy change. Since our New York office opened in 1987, we have committed more than $3.9 billion in equity, loans and grants to affordable housing and community to create or preserve over 73,000 affordable homes across New York State, and we currently lead groundbreaking programs focused on anti-displacement, eviction prevention, and community land trusts, among other things.

On behalf of Enterprise, I'd like to thank Speaker Johnson, Chair Dromm and the New York City Council for the opportunity to testify on the city's FY 2022 executive budget, and for its leadership in the face of this continuing public health and economic crisis. In these difficult times, we urge you to support critical programs that are keeping New Yorkers in stable housing, and ensure that affordable housing and eviction prevention are prioritized in our city's road to recovery.

**Family Homelessness and Students in Temporary Housing**

Enterprise co-convenes the Family Homelessness Coalition with partners New Destiny Housing and Citizens' Committee for Children, and our steering committee is composed of a diverse group of affordable housing owners, advocates, and shelter and service providers working to end family homelessness across the city. The Covid-19 pandemic has profoundly exacerbated poverty, unemployment and rent-burden, all of which are risk factors associated with homelessness. There are over 43,000 people living in family shelters, including over 22,000 children. [1] **Our coalition**

[1] https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NYCHomeless-ShelterPopulation-Worksheet-1983-Present-1.pdf

**urges city leaders to focus on eliminating family homelessness to ensure no child grows up in shelter by employing a multi-pronged approach that includes strengthening prevention and housing stability measures, ensuring that shelters are safe with on-site services that promote child and family wellbeing, and expanding the supply of permanent housing, including supportive housing, available to extremely-low income and homeless families.**

Despite the hard work of many educators and Department of Education (DOE) staff members, including the DOE's Students in Temporary Housing (STH) team, the pandemic has worsened the inequities that have long existed for students in shelter. With the DOE poised to receive tens of millions of dollars in COVID-19 federal relief funding specifically allocated to support students experiencing homelessness, **we strongly urge you to hire 150 shelter-based Students in Temporary Housing Community Coordinators using the DOE's American Rescue Plan homeless funding.** These coordinators will ensure that students in shelter can reconnect with school and get the support they need following this year of educational disruption.

**Eviction Prevention**

One key way city leaders can prevent homelessness is by preventing evictions. New York City faces a pending eviction crisis, with eviction filings continuing despite moratoria. Over 1,300 eviction cases were filed in New York City alone during the week of April 25.[2] The brunt of this crisis is being felt disproportionately by communities of color, who have experienced more Covid-19 related job losses and are much more likely to have fallen behind on rent payments than white New Yorkers. The inability of struggling tenants to afford their rent in turn impacts landlords, who are themselves reeling from the pandemic's economic fallout, and our affordable and rent stabilized housing stock. While eviction moratoria have been critical to keeping renters in their homes during the pandemic, they do not address rent arrears and are not a permanent solution.

In response, a coalition of property owners, nonprofits and service providers came together to launch Project Parachute, a philanthropic fund managed by Enterprise to keep vulnerable and underserved New Yorkers in stable housing, funding community-based service providers to bolster their eviction prevention services, including direct financial assistance to address arrears. Project Parachute funds are being deployed to expand the capacity of Homebase providers to administer eviction prevention services. **We urge you to ensure that these nonprofits are equipped to handle an anticipated surge in demand once moratoria expire, particularly in hard-hit neighborhoods where arrears remain high**.

As part of Project Parachute, we convened the New York City Eviction Prevention Roundtable, a diverse group of property owners, tenant advocates, and service providers who sought to develop

[2] https://evictionlab.org/eviction-tracking/new-york-ny/



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upstream policy solutions to prevent evictions. The roundtable created a set of recommendations, outlined in our report *Preventing Eviction for New Yorkers Amid Covid-19,* to expand eligibility for and streamline existing assistance programs, align them more closely with the cost of housing, and address growing economic need.

One key recommendation of both our roundtable and the Family Homelessness Coalition is to raise the maximum amount of the CityFHEPS voucher, which is currently far too low given the cost of housing. **New York City can make this change right now by passing Intro. 146, a bill with strong council support that would raise the CityFHEPS rent limit to Fair Market Rent.** CityFHEPS is a critical tool to help families in shelter find permanent, stable housing. However, there are currently no neighborhoods in New York City where the median asking rent is affordable with a CityFHEPS voucher, and families with the voucher struggle to find housing as a result. An analysis by WIN (Women in Need) found that this reform would allow thousands of families to exit the shelter system faster, saving money long term by reducing shelter stays.

**Community Land Trusts**

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are a proven model to facilitate community-led development. They are flexible and can support rental, limited-equity and mutual housing, as well as commercial and mixed-use development and other community needs. The City should invest further in CLTs as a stabilizing force to prevent displacement. In 2017, in partnership with the New York State Office of the Attorney General, we launched and later expanded the Community Land Trust Initiative to support CLTs statewide, including three New York City groups. However, these funds are set to wind down by the end of the year. **We join our partners at the citywide Community Land Trust initiative in requesting $1.51 million in discretionary funding** to build on this work and support the work of 14 community-based organizations and four citywide organizations that are developing CLTs as a source of permanently affordable housing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at an unprecedented time in our city's history and for your continued leadership prioritizing the housing needs of vulnerable New Yorkers. We look forward to our continued work together to ensure a robust and equitable recovery.



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**East New York Community Land Trust**
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Brooklyn, NY 11208

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**T** 646.335.5973

**eastnewyorkclt.org**

Dear Council Finance Committee Chair Dromm and esteemed Council Members,

My name is Hannah Anousheh and I am the coordinator of the ENY Community land Trust (ENY CLT) and I am on staff at Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (CHLDC). ENY CLT is a member of New York City community land trust initiative (NYCCLI) and we are one of 18 CLT groups in the growing citywide CLT movement.

We urge the City Council provide 1.51 million or more in funding for the citywide CLT initiative. This will allow CHLDC to support the growth of the ENY CLT.

CHLDC received funding for the CLT initiative in FY21 and this allowed us to hire a CLT coordinator to support community leaders in the formation of the ENY CLT. Together, we have grown the capacity of the ENY CLT over the last year and now we are eager to acquire land and partner with non-profit developers to build much needed low-income housing.

In order acquire land, ongoing organizing and engagement of residents is an enormous priority. The ENY CLT members do an incredible amount of work as volunteers but it is a lot of work and City Council funding for staff and other operational costs is so crucial for our ability to grow our CLT.

Sincerely,
Hannah Anousheh
ENY CLT Coordinator, CHLDC

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Dear Council Finance Committee Chair Dromm and esteemed Council Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Izoria Fields and I am the Vice President of the East New York Community Land Trust (East New York CLT). The East New York CLT is a grassroots organization that was birthed out of the Covid-19 Pandemic. We are advocates for community control of land to provide truly sustainable affordability in perpetuity, create homeownership opportunities, develop commercial spaces for locally owned businesses and satisfy other community needs.

We are currently faced with a homelessness crisis in the midst of a global pandemic. The East New York CLT has surveyed hundreds of vacant lots under the jurisdiction of HPD and other city agencies that have been left vacant and unkempt. These deplorable conditions promote dumping of trash, which turns said lots to breeding grounds for rats and other pests. Instead, these lots should be used for truly affordable home ownership opportunities and other land uses for the benefit of the East New York community.

As it stands, several developments have been built in East New York and marketed under the guise of affordable housing. However, the question becomes “affordable for whom”? The AMIs (area median income) used to qualify families to become tenants in these developments are typically much higher than East New York’s neighborhood AMI. This contributes to the systematic displacement of long term East New York residents, who simply cannot afford to live here anymore. With East New York being one of the neighborhoods with the lowest cost of living, people are being priced out of the city altogether. As a Realtor, it pains me to tell potential clients that they cannot afford to purchase a home or even rent an apartment at market value in the neighborhood where they have lived for decades and raised their families.

When out surveying our neighbors, we witnessed with our very own eyes, that some of our neighbors are living under deplorable conditions to avoid homelessness and the NYC shelter system. Some of our neighbors do not have the basics that would be expected in a first world country and more so a thriving city like the Big Apple (NYC), such as paved roads, sidewalks, storm drains and access to city sewer to name a few. The city has been promising residents and property owners solutions that have not materialized. When there is heavy rain or snow, residents are trapped in their homes with no way out. These are qualities of a third world country right here in New York City.

Together, we must work to change the narrative and show our people that they have not been forgotten and they will not be ignored. We ask that you fully fund the citywide CLT initiative at $1.51 million and the East New York CLT specifically with as much funding as possible, as we work together on a macro level to ensure positive change for the benefit of our communities on a micro level. Thank you for your time and attention to the critical matter of land affordability in East New York and throughout the city.

Kind Regards,

Izoria Fields

Vice President, ENY CLT Board

# EQUITY ADVOCATES

FY2022 Budget Requests

**Testimony Submitted by**
**Gabrielle Blavatsky, Co-Founder and Policy Director of Equity Advocates**
**Before the NYC Council Committee on Finance**

**FY22 Executive Budget Hearing**
**May 25th, 2021**

My name is Gabrielle Blavatsky and I am the Co-Founder and Policy Director of Equity Advocates. Thank you to Chairperson Daniel Dromm as well as the members of the NYC Council Committee on Finance for holding today's hearing and the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Equity Advocates builds the capacity of nonprofit organizations to address the underlying causes of food inequity through policy and systems change. We partner with New York-based organizations working to alleviate hunger and poverty, providing them with the tools they need to be more civically engaged—including policy education, advocacy training and coalition building services.

New York City emerged as the first American epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic and is still reeling from the twin economic and public health crises caused by the pandemic. In response, last March Equity Advocates organized the New York COVID-19 Food Coalition: a diverse multi-sector group of over 40 food system stakeholders from across New York City. Our Coalition is advocating for resources to ensure that the local food system and supply chain remains intact, that all families are able to access the food and support they need, and that front line community embedded organizations can respond effectively to the crisis

Since the pandemic shut down the City last March, millions of people have slipped into poverty and hunger due to job losses, school and senior center closures. The New York City Department of Labor reports that New York City's unemployment rate was 11.2% in April 2021 - a 166%  higher than March 2020's unemployment rate of 4.2%. According to Hunger Free America, it's estimated that between 1.6 to 2.2 million people are food insecure in New York- a significant increase from pre-COVID rates. As organizations embedded in community food access and emergency hunger relief work, we have seen demand for emergency food and social services increase significantly over the last year as a result.

We respectfully request your support for the inclusion of the following recommendations in the final FY22 New York City Budget. These investments in human and social service programs and organizations serving low income communities of color will help advance

equity, addressing some of the existing systemic inequalities exacerbated by COVID, and ensure that New Yorkers are well fed and supported as we start the slow process of rebuilding from these crises:

NYC EXECUTIVE BUDGET FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

*Emergency Feeding and Benefits Access*

- **$10M increase in baseline funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP).** In addition, as the City Council noted in their budget response, emergency food providers receiving EFAP funding should be allowed to use program funds to cover their increased administrative, rental and operational costs that have emerged since the start of the pandemic. We also ask that the RFP for EFAP be adjusted to allow more opportunity and incentive for the purchase of fresh food and that pantries have choice in what they buy as they do with the New York State Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance Program.
- **$20M in baseline funding to support emergency food programs operated by small community based organizations** that are not a part of the EFAP network.
- $**16.6M to Fully fund DFTA's Home Delivered Meals program for older adults**. Reimbursement rates for this program are currently 20% below the national average cost of a meal for urban areas. Agencies administering the program are struggling to stay afloat, especially with new meal choice requirements under the new RFP that were not funded. As the City Council noted in their Budget Response, we must bring funding in line with the true cost of a meal, which is close to the national average rate of $11.78 per meal (currently $9.58 per meal). An investment of $16.6 million is required to meet this request.
- **$37M increase to Human Resource Administration towards nutrition benefit program enrollment and outreach.** Food insecurity has nearly doubled in NYC since the start of the pandemic. As City Council noted in their budget response, an additional $37M in funding for HRA is needed to improve client service, benefits access, and to address individuals that have been pushed off of safety net programs due to their receipt of pandemic relief support. We also call on the Administration to allocate some of this funding towards re-opening field offices closed during the pandemic, expanding emergency food distribution efforts, adding additional staff to the hotline to enroll people in programs as well as additional money for promoting Health Bucks and Get the Good Stuff Program at DOHMH.
- **GetFoodNYC**. The City Council's budget response calls for a new infusion of $80M for the Get Food NYC program in FY22. Yet, little to no information has been made available to advocates or City Council on the details and impacts of the Get Food program to date. Although we are supportive of additional funding for this program,

we underscore the need for an oversight hearing with City Council's General Welfare staff in June 2021 as well as a reporting bill on the on the Administration's COVID-19 Emergency Food Programs to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the GetFood program before it is made a permanent fixture of NYC's emergency food response efforts.

- **Additional $32 Million Reinvestment in Emergency Food Relief in NYC**. Last spring, the City distributed $25 million to emergency food providers to help address the hunger crisis exacerbated by COVID. We support the Administration's request for an additional investment of $32 Million towards these efforts, including $27.7M for the P-FRED program as well as funding to add additional staff and capacity to the Mayor's Office of Food Policy. We also call on the Administration to reinstate the delivery of fresh produce to emergency food providers through the P-FRED program as quickly as possible and urge the City Council to include review and analysis of the P-FRED program at the planned General Welfare Oversight Committee hearing in June as well.

*School Food*

- **$3.5 million for additional school food managers in The Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS)**. OFNS has been working tirelessly to make sure that students have the food they so desperately need during COVID-19 school closures, and to ensure that these meals are high quality and culturally competent. In order to do so, an additional 60 school food managers should be employed to plan and review appealing menus, educate students on the importance of eating healthfully, train new personnel, and increase participation in the school meals program. Funding for these additional 60 managers would enable OFNS to better achieve these goals, helping to ensure that children are well-fed and ready to learn. To support these managers a culinary institute should be reinstated.

*Community Food Sovereignty*

- **Fully Restore $34M in Funding for NYC Composting program**. We were pleased to see the Administration's enthusiasm for fulling resuming organics collection and expanding curbside recycling in the City, including the call for a $19M investment to expand curbside composting and food scrap drop off sites. We also support the Administration's calls for a $7.5M investment in compost collection in schools and $4M for fall leaf and yard collections. We would also like to see the City Council's request for $3.5M for new composting processing sites and $250,000 for a feasibility study on mandatory curbside composting included in the final budget as well.

For more information please contact:
Gabrielle Blavatsky, Policy Director at Equity Advocates: gabrielle@nyequityadvocates.org

# EQUITY ADVOCATES

FY2022 Budget Requests

- **Allocate $1 Million to establish a new Food Justice Grant Program housed within the Mayor's Office of Food Policy (MOFP) that supports community-led projects to grow food justice**. In their recently released 10 Year Food Policy Plan, the MOFP calls for the establishment of a Food Justice Fund. We would like to see this initiative launched and modeled on USDA's Community Food Project and Philadelphia's Food Justice Initiative, and designed to support many different types of community-driven solutions to create a more just food system that empowers communities to grow, sell, and eat healthy food. The purpose of the Initiative is to improve healthy food access by investing in community-based projects designed and led by the people most impacted by race, social, health, and environmental injustices. We urge the City to fund this program at $1 Million and offer grants of at least $200,000 to each agency under this program for both planning and implementation projects serving high need areas identified by Racial Equity Task Force. We also ask that the Mayor's Office of Food Policy establish an advisory board of practitioners to establish grant criteria ,review grant RFPs and select awardees. Types of projects funded under this pilot should include:
    - The establishment of worker owned food cooperatives or funding for CBOs to support the creation of and provide technical assistance to consumer and worker-owned food businesses.
    - Community kitchen programs for CBOs to connect community based food businesses, chefs and caterers to affordable kitchen space to provide regular and emergency meal services offer culinary job training and programs like Red Rabbit and Hot Bread Kitchen.
    - Community based training and workforce development opportunities to support regional rural and urban agriculture enterprises, especially for youth and BIPOC farmers, such Green City Force and Farm School NYC to create a pipeline of urban farming and food systems career opportunities.
    - SNAP Program benefits outreach and community organizing

NYC COUNCIL BUDGET INITIATIVE FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

It is imperative that discretionary funding through individual Council Members, Caucuses and Delegations is fully funded. City Council Discretionary Funding often represents a significant portion of small community based nonprofits' budgets, many of which are led by, serve and are embedded in communities of color. The work that our nonprofits and community-based organizations (CBOs) are doing to feed and support communities most heavily impacted by COVID-19 are more essential than ever as more and more New Yorkers turn to them during the recovery. We urge the City Council to fund the following initiatives:

For more information please contact:
Gabrielle Blavatsky, Policy Director at Equity Advocates: gabrielle@nyequityadvocates.org

# EQUITY ADVOCATES

## FY2022 Budget Requests

- **Increase funding for Access to Healthy Food and Nutritional Education**, which included a pilot program at the City University of New York to increase food access for food insecure college students. This program was funded at $2.259 Million in FY21.
- **Maintain $5.659 million for food pantries (DYCD)**
- **Restore $3.609 million for Worker Cooperative and Business Development Initiative at SBS**. ($3.067 million restored in FY21)
- **Ensure $725,000 for the Food Access and Benefits Initiative (HRA) is restored in FY22 Budget**.
- **Provide $250,000 in continued funding for FoodEd Resource Hub** based within the Tisch Food Center.
- **Restore $1 Million cut from Speakers initiative to address City Wide need in FY21**, need in FY21, some of which goes towards community driven food initiatives and CBOs nutrition education in DOE schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Gabrielle Blavatsky
***Policy Director, Equity Advocates***

For more information please contact:
Gabrielle Blavatsky, Policy Director at Equity Advocates: gabrielle@nyequityadvocates.org

FRIENDS OF THE EAST RIVER ESPLANADE
60TH - 120TH STREETS

My name is Stacy Papas and I am Executive Director of Friends of the East River Esplanade.

Everyone testifying today is telling you the exact same thing: our parks are underfunded and over-utilized and because of this they're in the worst shape they have been in since 2004.

Anyone walking along the East River Esplanade can tell you exactly where the garbage cans are consistently overflowing onto the pedestrian path and dropping garbage into the East River. Why is that?

Because there is no vehicle access so staff have to manually carry trash bags out of the park to a garbage drop. It is physically impossible for Parks Staff to keep up with the amount of trash that is produced; not because of people littering but because of the deteriorating conditions of the pathways and crumbling substructure of the Esplanade. Parks Staff cannot drive a vehicle in to transport trash out.

Budget cuts have created an abundance of inefficiencies for Parks staff and their ability to do their jobs:

- Trees are planted but there is no way to water them.
- Lawns are seeded but there is no irrigation system or fences to protect the new growth.
- New open spaces are developed yet water and electricity are not connected. The remedy? More money and time to rip it all up and start over.
- Pathways are laid out but not wide enough or supportive enough for vehicle access.
- Seasonal labor is hired yet incapable of doing skilled jobs.
- Volunteers are asked to help out but Parks makes them wait 30+ days to approve their projects.

NYC Parks role is to maintain the hard-scapes, landscapes, trees, lawns, benches, pathways, and comfort stations. They're not your mother or your housekeeper. They're not here to tidy up after you. Clean up your own mess! Curb your dog and pull them out of the gardens that volunteers work so hard to maintain. Use the dog runs that have been built for you. Teach your children not to litter. Once our citizens take responsibility for their own garbage, NYC Parks can focus on maintaining the actual park. Hours of their workday are spent cleaning up after every one of us. It's no wonder that they cannot get to any other tasks in a timely manner.

It doesn't take more money to clean up our parks. It takes more money to improve the processes, create supportive and resource rich working conditions for the Parks Staff, forethought and planning for daily & seasonal maintenance, and for the longevity of the park.

Budget cuts created gaps in the work flow and it shows. Increase the budget and improve the systems starting today.

Thank you

# Testimony of Rhonda Jackson
# Submitted to The New York City Council's Committee on Finance
# Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget
# May 25, 2021

My name is Rhonda Jackson, and I am a consultant with the Family Homelessness Coalition. As a member of the coalition with lived experience, I urge the Council to pass Intro. 146 and fund it in the final budget for Fiscal Year 2022.

I am a lifelong New Yorker with firsthand experience with homelessness. In late 2016, I entered the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelter system. I had nowhere else to go, and that experience forever changed my life. In 2018, I received a voucher and retained an apartment through an affordable housing lottery. Picture if you will the feeling of being able to finally get a place to call home. Coming out of the shelter system, I visualized creating a safe place – a home for my son and myself, thereby cutting the ties of generational homelessness. We all know this is a major cause of homelessness: Rents are astronomical and unaffordable for people like me. I believed I would be stable and have somewhere to finally call home, but now the rug may be snatched out from me again.

That same year, Intro. 146 was introduced in the Council. The bill is now supported by 38 Council Members who understand the impending disaster of vouchers not keeping up with Fair Market Rents (FMR). They understand the necessity of keeping people housed instead of being evicted and returning to shelters. And yet, we are still having this conversation. Although NYC is the only city that has a right to shelter mandate, no one wants to be LIVING in a shelter. How can we raise healthy children in shelters? How does it feel to keep destroying their security and their dreams? Every person, every family, every child deserves a home of their own!

The Administration, HRA/DHS, the Mayor, the Governor, shelter providers, Council Members, and Assemblymembers, keep saying “no one wants you (us) in shelter,” but the failure to pass Intro. 146 for years suggests otherwise. Meanwhile, the daily census on March 25, 2021, showed 16,000 children sleeping in shelters. If Intro. 146 is not adopted, hundreds of thousands will be forced to re-enter shelters. The data does not lie.

Sadly, even those of us fortunate to escape the shelter system are faced with the reality of becoming homeless again because New York City is not keeping up with the FMR increases, and returning to shelter is not an option I or anyone else care to face. There are no neighborhoods in this city with access to homes for the amounts allotted by the CityFHEPS vouchers – $1,300 dollars cannot even get a basement apartment.

Intro. 146 will solve this, by raising the maximum rents and allowing people to keep their vouchers for as long as they need them. The Council must reform the vouchers to keep people in their homes.

Imagine being forced out of your home because the city you love is telling you that you will never leave the confines of bondage and impoverishment, and that elected officials would much rather relegate citizens to unsafe and unstable housing instead of creating a plan that benefits the whole of its society.

Then imagine how this sustainable solution of Intro. 146 could turn our city around, eradicate the poverty, and eliminate homelessness by helping people avoid shelters or leave them more quickly.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the importance of passing Intro. 146 and including it in the Fiscal Year 2022 budget.

Skip Blumberg, Friends of City Hall Park
Testimony to The City Council's Executive Budget Hearing

City Hall is a building in an 8-acre public park. As City Councilmembers have likely already noticed, City Hall Park is in the most deplorable condition, at least since **Friends of City Hall Park** began in 1992. The lawns and flower beds right outside the City Council chamber and the Mayor's office are invaded by weeds, the trash on paths constant. This is understandable given that the DPR gardener quit disgruntled by lack of admin support on November 20, 2020 and has not been replaced, while there is only one full-time maintenance worker filling the 6 budgeted positions. Morale among remaining DPR staff is at a low. FCHP's Wednesday Garden Group's volunteer efforts to fill the void are hampered by a lack of DPR horticultural oversight and the park's conditions. There is no water in the water fountains, faucets, lawn irrigation or the centerpiece fountain. There are 14 path lights not working. The hundreds of broken path bluestones are physical evidence that the park is literally crumbling. Agreements made by DPR have been unfulfilled. Locked gates agreed to be kept open to the public by DPR Commissioner Silver alienate public park land with a lawsuit the public's only remaining recourse.

Not only is City Hall Park a precious neighborhood park and the historic city commons, it is the metaphorical optics for the balance and stability of our municipal government.

If City Hall Park is so downtrodden, we imagine that the condition of parks in Council districts throughout the city should signal to Councilmembers an emergency situation that is a priority for finding solutions.

The richest city in the richest country in the world can afford providing world-class parks to its citizens and visitors.

Aside from the soon-to-be next DPR Commissioner restoring morale among DPR's hard-working essential workers, the **allocation by the City Council to DPR's operating budget that is recommended by New Yorkers for Parks, as well as revision of the DPR capital request process, are required** to provide proper conditions for this crucial, most democratically-provided service that our City government offers.

~ Skip Blumberg  President, Friends of City Hall Park  May 24, 2021

Dear New York City Council Financial Committee,

My name is Claire-Frances Sullivan and I live in Harlem in zip code 10031. I'm writing to voice my support of divesting money from the New York City Police Department through reform bills such as the Fair and Timely Parole Act and the Less is More Act. Both these acts would save over $600 million annually for taxpayers like myself, and I personally would like to see that money go toward state-sponsored health care, education, housing, and accessibility/infrastructure like improvements to the MTA and other vital New York services. Less incarceration means saving money for our city, and it means better, safer, more fuller lives for me, my neighbors, and our community. Earlier this year and last year, citizens like me called for a divestment of at least $1 billion dollars from the NYPD to go toward infrastructure like expanding in-home care for senior citizens and other people who need it, health care, and increasing the breadth of public education. These are the things I want to spend my tax dollars on. I would much rather pay for my neighborhood's public schools to feed my neighbor's children than to pay a police officer to abuse my neighbor.

Thank you for doing the right thing and divesting money from the NYPD and investing that money in my community.

Sincerely,
Claire-Frances Sullivan
Assembly District 71
Senate District 30
Zip Code 10031




**TESTIMONY of FPWA**

**Presented to:**
**New York City Council Committee on Finance**
**Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget Hearing**
**Hon. Chair Daniel Dromm**
**Tuesday, May 25th, 2021**

**Prepared By:**
**Jessica Cinque**
**Human Services Policy Analyst**

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Good morning committee members, Chair Dromm, and my fellow witnesses testifying today.

My name is Jessica Cinque, and I am a Policy Analyst at FPWA. I would like to thank Chairperson Dromm and the members of the Committee on Finance for hearing testimony on the Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget.

FPWA is an anti-poverty, policy, and advocacy nonprofit with a membership network of 170 human service and faith-based organizations. We have been a prominent force in New York City's social services system for nearly 100 years, advocating for fair public policies, collaborating with partner agencies, and growing our community-based membership network to meet the needs of New Yorkers. Each year, through our network of member agencies, FPWA reaches close to 1.5 million New Yorkers.

Nonprofit organizations have been critical to our city historically and during Covid-19. Their inherent ability to quickly adapt to the changing needs of the communities they serve has provided lifelines for residents living through these prolonged health and economic crises.

Poverty and other social indicators point to both the intensifying need for human services, and the increasingly challenging environment in which they operate.[1] As has been demonstrated before and throughout the pandemic, the human services sector is consistently utilized as the City's first line of defense in combating these pressing issues. In doing so, the sector contributes as significantly to the health and stability of the economy as it does to the health and stability of New Yorkers.

Unfortunately, the erosion of funding coupled with antiquated systems that make it difficult for nonprofits to operate have stymied their efficacy. Rising costs, increasing needs, and a lack of investment have undermined the health of the sector. Underinvestment is exacerbated by systems and processes that do not leverage nonprofit expertise in communities. New York City is at a critical juncture and has an opportunity to secure the services provided by the sector to the millions of residents who receive them. Vital changes are needed to deliver essential services, both in the way nonprofits are funded and in the structure of how nonprofits work with government.

Mayor de Blasio's Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget takes several important steps to support New Yorkers' recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic and social injustice it has wrought. We applaud the Mayor's efforts to fund indirect costs of non-profit providers in the health and human services sectors, make 3-K universal by 2023, expand access to early education services for children with special needs, and fund the Senior Center Model Budget Initiative as well as the expansion of senior services through its Community Care plan investments. We also applaud the opportunities made possible through the Summer Rising initiative providing academic resources with summer enrichment programming at no cost to families at a time when they need it most. As we have seen over the course of the last year, Covid has been particularly emblematic of the exaggerated suffering endured by low-income communities and communities of color due to the injustices of the systems currently in place. As such, these communities have disproportionately been impacted by inequities, and the milestones reached in the Executive budget are important steps in the journey to becoming a city known for centering equity for all its residents.

However, New York City has not quite made all the strides it needs in order to reach that goal. With the economy of the City and State less stable than ever, it is even more crucial for the City to respond to the

[1] Restore Opportunity Now. (2017a). Voices of New York's Human Services Sector. https://humanservicescouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/Initiatives/RestoreOpportunityNow/Voices-of-Human-Services.pdf

high needs of children, older adults, and families who have borne the brunt of the burdens felt by us all throughout the pandemic and now into the recovery. In order for New York's recovery to be lasting, those with the direst needs must be addressed first and fully. Therefore, FPWA strongly supports the investment of the City into its partnerships with nonprofits by committing to:

- Expanding access to child care and youth programming for families who need it the most:
    - $10 million for approximately 1000 new full-day family child care slot for infants & toddlers.
    - $17.5 million to convert over 2,000 school-day/school-year slots for 3- and 4-year-old children to full-day/year-round slots.
    - $17.5 million to expand center-based infant toddler capacity by approximately 700 slots.
    - Increasing rates for community-based Summer Rising providers to $1700 for COMPASS elementary programs and $1018 for SONYC middle school programs.

- Investing in services for older adults:
    - $16.6 million in funding for the DFTA budget for home-delivered meals to increase capacity to meet new demand and increase the per-meal reimbursement rate.

- Supporting human services workers:
    - $48 million for 3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for essential human services workers.

These measures will ensure that all New Yorkers have better access to dignity, opportunity, and upward mobility. This testimony seeks to address each request in brief detail to give the joint committee a contextualized understanding of the imperative of their immediate action.

**Expanding Access to Child Care and Youth Programming for Families Who Need It the Most:**

As New York builds up to a full recovery from the pandemic and its fallout, one of the primary goals of the mayor and the city is getting its residents back to work. In order to make that a reality, families must have arrangements in place on which they can rely. Residents cannot work full time if they do not have options available to them that provide for their children full time. Safe and constructive programming that is offered year-round and covers the entire workday is paramount in returning our city to a thriving hub of culture and productivity. A city cannot recover in full if it is only providing resources for partial needs. In the most recent data available for NYC pre-K, only 16% of all four-year-olds received full-day/year-round care while the remaining 84% were in school-day/school-year programs. This means that 84% of families with at least one child enrolled in NYC pre-k must make further child care, transportation, and other logistical arrangements to be able to reliably present and perform in full-time employment.

Mayor de Blasio's Executive Budget expands 3-K for All by 16,500 seats but makes no significant increase in full-day care or summer services for three- and four-year-old children. Moreover, these 16,500 seats do not include an increase in funding for full-day, year-round programs for infants and toddlers. Furthermore, many longstanding community-based organizations (CBOs) which primarily serve low-income communities and communities of color are now set to *only* provide school-day/school-year programs, a significant barrier to accessing childcare for working families. Meanwhile, many family child care providers who provide full-day care and the bulk of care for the youngest children were recently awarded Department of Education (DOE) contracts for only school-day care for three-year-olds. This will

result in many providers with inadequate funding to pay their staff, and in some cases will leave families with no child care options at all.

In order to provide year-round programming, these summer programs need additional resources since robust summer programming is a critical tool for providing full-year services as a means of combatting learning and social loss.

In Spring 2021, the City announced plans to run a new program, Summer Rising, in Summer 2021. This program is a partnership between DOE, the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), and CBOs. The City plans to serve 190,000 youth through Summer Rising, a larger number than is currently served in the DYCD-contracted system, through which CBOs currently contribute to summer programming, and plans to expand contracts with CBOs to serve even more youth. While CBOs are thrilled to see an expansion of access to summer programming for the city's youth, this goal has created significant concern among CBO providers because they have been told their reimbursement rates will remain the same as every other summer, which were already underfunded.

In order to provide services for Summer Rising, CBOs will need to recruit and hire additional staff, ensure those staff have the proper background checks in place, update SACC licenses, purchase materials and supplies, recruit youth and families to participate, all while receiving no additional support from DOE. Furthermore, current mandated staffing ratios are 15:1, requiring providers to hire more staff than in previous summers. It is also crucial that these staff be compensated fairly and beyond a minimum wage due to concerns about labor shortages. For all of these reasons, CBOs must be given adequate funding and administrative support in order to implement this new program successfully.

Resting the responsibility of the success or failure of Summer Rising squarely on the shoulders of providers and their willingness and ability to work for free is unacceptable. This sets CBOs up to fail in their responsibilities in a Summer Rising partnership and in their responsibilities to the families they serve.

**With all of this in mind, FPWA urges the City to invest $45 million in our city's infants and toddlers by providing:**

- **$10 million for 1000 new full-day family child care slot for infants and & toddlers.**
- **$17.5 million to convert over 2,000 school-day/school-year slots for 3- and 4-year-old children to full-day/year-round slots.**
- **$17.5 million to expand center-based infant toddler capacity by 700 slots.**

**As well as increasing Summer Rising provider rates to adequately compensate CBO staff to:**

- **$1700 per student for COMPASS elementary programs, and**
- **$1018 per student for SONYC middle school programs.**

## Investing in Services for Older Adults

In FY20, over 4.6 million meals were delivered to over 31 thousand homebound adults across NYC[2]. Unfortunately, Covid-19 has driven significant increases to the demand for home-delivered meals, and thousands of new clients have been added to the service since then. However, many of the community-

[2] https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2021/dfta.pdf

based organizations who serve these meals lose thousands of dollars every year due to low reimbursement rates that do not cover the full cost of the meals. In FY21, despite the higher need for culturally competent home-delivered meals, the City continues to pay inadequate reimbursement rates that are below the national average by approximately $2 per meal.

**FPWA respectfully requests an additional $21 million:**

- **$16.6 million for the home delivered meals program in FY22, including $13.6 million for weekday meals and $3 million for weekend and holiday meals.**

## Supporting Human Services Workers

The need for human services increased exponentially during the pandemic as residents from across New York struggled with profound uncertainty and extreme isolation due to mandatory shutdowns. During this time, direct service providers adapted to a changing world and immediately made moves to ensure they could continue to provide their services.

These heroic human services workers are overwhelmingly women, and chiefly women of color. Since nonprofit contracts remain underfunded, these workers were already suffering from subsisting below a viable living wage. By not renewing the COLA for human services contracts in the middle of a pandemic, the City inadvertently institutionalizes the practice of underpaying women of color, often to the point of poverty.

Moreover, withholding the COLA is an ineffective way to reduce costs to balance the budget. Since approximately 60 percent of those working in New York's nonprofit human services sector are utilizing or have a family member utilizing some form of public assistance benefit such as Medicaid or food stamps3, keeping wages this low will only increase the need for (and costs of) these public assistance programs.

**FPWA calls for the City to allocate:**

- **$48 million in funding for Human Services workers which represents a 3% Cost of Living Adjustment.**

## Conclusion

The FY22 budget will be a determining force in how our city recovers. This budget can either ensure that New York City recovers more equitably and stronger than before, or it has the potential to deepen and further entrench the inequities laid bare by this pandemic.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. FPWA hopes that you will consider our budget priorities and recommendations during this year's budget negotiation process and we look forward to working closely with you to ensure that New Yorkers receive the services they need in order to thrive.

[3] http://www.fpwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Undervalued-Underpaid-Worforce-Report-March-2017.pdf

**Fresh Air Fund**
**City Council Testimony**
**May 25, 2021**

Thank you Chair Dromm and distinguished members of the City Council for the opportunity to testify during this virtual hearing. We applaud the Council and City for prioritizing summer programming for the youth.

My name is Fatima Shama, and I have the privilege of being the Executive Director of The Fresh Air Fund. For 145 years, The Fresh Air Fund has provided the City's children with summer experiences that help them thrive and succeed emotionally, academically, and socially. The realities of last summer and a global health pandemic plaguing our communities, The Fund suspended our traditional summer programming. However, our team was determined to provide NYC children with the summer experiences we knew they needed and deserved.

Recognizing and knowing the needs of the children and their families we created four new programs to engage and support NYC's youth: The first, Fresh Air Everywhere, our virtual camp for children ages 7-13; second, Fresh Air Teen Programs, our stipended credentialling program for teens ages 13-17; third, Fresh Air Family Wellness, which provided families day trips to our camps for a day retreat in the fresh air, and fourth, Fresh Air Summer Spaces with turned 10 Open Streets across 4 boroughs into safe play spaces for children ages 5-13. That's the program I'm here to speak with you about today.

The Department of Transportation was a critical partner last year in helping us identify Open Streets for Fresh Air Fund programming, and I want to thank many of you on this call for your individual assistance and support in working with city agencies to make the program a success last year. We were honored to be on the ground in your districts reframing Open Streets to provide children (and their families) free summer programming.

Recognizing the need for elevated safety and wellness protocols, we implemented COVID protocols at every level so parents would feel safe leaving their children for a few hours, and so that the children could focus on doing what they deserve to do -- learn and have fun. I also want to thank those of you who were able to stop by and see the children at play as a few of the Summer Spaces. As I mentioned above, our focus was not only giving children the chance to play safely in their own neighborhoods, but also to employ young people from those neighborhoods, giving them income and the opportunity to gain experience in the youth development field.

This year, The Fresh Air Fund is once again committed to providing children opportunities to engage with the outdoors while building upon and expanding the programs we launched in 2020. We are partnering once again the DOT's Open Streets for Fresh Air Summer Spaces and are in the process of choosing 10-12 locations throughout the City in neighborhoods that

continue to be among those most affected by the ongoing pandemic. We will again provide structured and safe play and employment for children and youth. This year, we are collaborating with other community-based organizations and block associations on programming and recruitment. And building on a partnership with the American Ballet Theatre, we are working with other arts and STEM organizations on additional program enrichment – the American Ballet Theater is returning to work with us in all boroughs; the Queens Public Library will do programming in Queens locations; BioBus will do programming in the Bronx, and the ASCAP Foundation will help us do music programming. We are committed to providing opportunities for our children to continue to learn and have fun and to have engaged enrichment with great community partners.

We estimate having 19,440 available slots for children to play, over 27 program days if weather allows, and we plan to employ 180 young New Yorkers, ages 16-24, giving them income and youth development experience, a number that could increase to 228 as we are exploring the opportunity to work with NYC's Summer Youth Employment Program.

A $50,000 funding allocation from The Council would allow The Fund to deepen its impact and demonstrate an alignment with priorities you all share in giving youth safe, memorable and fun summer programming.

Thank you again for your time this morning and for your commitment to ensuring that New York City's children have every opportunity to play and learn this summer. I look forward to welcoming and seeing many of you at Fresh Air Summer Spaces in July and August.

GENERATION CITIZEN

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**
Elizabeth Clay Roy

**NEW YORK EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**
Khin Mai Aung

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**Testimony of Khin Mai Aung**
**New York Executive Director, Generation Citizen**
**May 25, 2021**
**New York City Council**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Generation Citizen (GC) regarding the Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget. I'm Khin Mai Aung, the Executive Director at Generation Citizen New York (GCNY). GC respectfully requests that the City Council renew its investment in our civics education programming during Fiscal Year 2022 in the amount of $543,311, which would restore our pre-COVID-19 level of funding.

After a rapid pivot to virtual programming last spring due to the COVID-19 pandemic, GC rolled out a menu of virtual professional development, coaching and classroom supports in Fall 2020 to ensure that New York City educators had access to the resources and support needed to implement engaging, project-based civics education in their classrooms. As a result, we are thrilled that the vast majority (88%, or 38 in total) of target New York City educators over the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters have opted to continue collaborating with GC despite myriad challenges and uncertainties, as well as changes in their own teaching dockets.

GC's current Spring 2021 classes are engaging, dynamic and grappling with diverse topics. Among other things, our classes are studying local issues ranging from curricular concerns (e.g., the need for a more engaging science curriculum) to school conditions (lack of outdoor space and gym use during lunch, or school cell phone policies), as well as broader school or community concerns (police community relations, homophobia and bullying in schools, and the need for expanded extracurricular youth programming). Some classes focused on COVID-19 specific themes such as racism amplified by pandemic disruptions, as well as mental health issues, anxiety, depression, and drug abuse in our communities this past year.

Now, New York City - and our education system as a whole - sit at a hopeful moment as we look toward the full reopening of in person programming in our public schools in Fall 2021. We have an opportunity to collectively move beyond the challenges we have faced to address their continued effect united as a city and school community. GC is committed to supporting our teachers and students to the fullest extent possible during this process, with hybrid in

person and virtual professional development, technical assistance, coaching and ongoing support tailored to individual school and educator needs. We will, as always, support New York City teachers and students as they examine and grapple with community and school concerns through our Action Civics programming, and foster the civic engagement journey of our youth.

GC is an eleven year-old national, nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to demystifying democracy for youth by bringing civics education into the classroom through a new, engaging pedagogy: Action Civics. Action Civics is a "student-centered, project-based approach to civics education that develops the individual skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for 21st century democratic practice" (National Action Civics Collaborative). It differs from normative, knowledge-based civic education in the same way that taking any "hands-on," project-based, or experiential course differs from reading a textbook. Students learn about democratic structures and processes by directly engaging with them, as well as with each other, to address one or more issues they care about, which are impacting their community.

GC is incredibly thankful for the City Council's continued funding as well as our continued partnership with the Department of Youth and Community Development, in the wake of budget cutbacks and an array of hurtles during the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope to continue partnering with you as we transition back to full in-person learning in the 2021-22 school year.

Thank you and the Committees for considering this testimony. I can be reached at kaung@generationcitizen.org with any questions or comments.

**Testimony**
New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearing
Tuesday, May 25, 2021

**Gowanus Canal Conservancy Testimony for the Executive Budget Hearing for the Committee on Finance**

Thank you for providing the opportunity to submit testimony on the City Council's Executive Budget Hearing.

My name is Jordan Heiden and I represent Gowanus Canal Conservancy (GCC), a non-profit organization dedicated to facilitating the development of a resilient, vibrant, open space network centered on the Gowanus Canal through activating and empowering community stewardship of the Gowanus Watershed. Today, I am urging the City Council to prioritize the long-term health and sustainability of our city by fully restoring the Parks Equity Initiative as well as last year's drastic budget cuts to NYC Parks, amounting in a loss of $84 million in funding for critical care of public space infrastructure.

Through this pandemic, our parks, natural areas, street trees, and gardens have been essential, providing New Yorkers with comfort, connection, exercise, and respite. In a neighborhood like Gowanus, where combined sewer overflow, street flooding, and urban heat island are everyday occurrences; parks, street trees, and other green infrastructure soak up stormwater to reduce flooding and sewage overflow, shade and cool our streets, and reduce air pollution. The ecosystem services provided by planted infrastructure address longstanding environmental issues, which will otherwise endanger our communities once again, both in the short term and through compounded impacts as the climate changes.

Over the past 20 years, the City has wisely invested capital dollars in this infrastructure in neighborhoods across the city, including through the Million Trees Campaign and the NYC Green Infrastructure Plan. Through OneNYC and the Community Parks Initiative, the DeBlasio administration has focused on investing equitably in green spaces across the five boroughs, to ensure that all New York City residents benefit from this infrastructure. In Gowanus, 670 young trees and 30 rain gardens installed over the past decade provide ecosystem services that make the neighborhood more livable and resilient, especially in times of crisis. The benefits of this planted infrastructure will grow exponentially as they mature, but their survival depends on adequate maintenance when they are young, including watering, weeding, pruning, litter and debris removal, and tree protection.

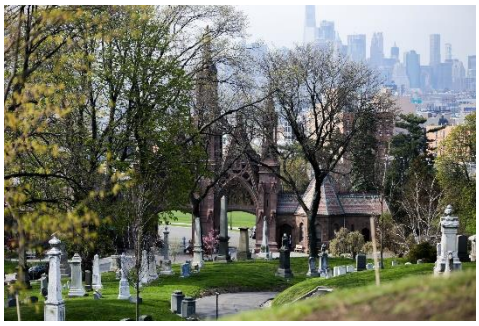
Last year, NYC Parks received the second largest budget cut of any City agency. In Gowanus, these budget cuts meant gaps in maintenance for long-term investments the City has made in critical neighborhood infrastructure.

Last year's budget cuts also significantly impacted the Parks Equity Initiative, which supports GCC programs, such as the Gowanus Tree Network, which engages local neighbors in the care of young street trees. This care is essential for tree growth into maturity, supporting an urban forest that can provide shade, air purification, and stormwater management. In 2020, limitations posed by the COVID-19 crisis and a lack of funding through the Parks Equity Initiative have further widened gaps in critical neighborhood maintenance for these essential urban lungs.

With an anticipated increase in open space use in the upcoming season, GCC stands with our partners in the Play Fair Coalition to ensure future budget planning prioritizes essential maintenance, job creation, and security for frontline Parks workers, and funding for non-profit stewardship activities to support this valuable infrastructure. In this time of crisis, it is more important than ever to protect essential infrastructure and support a resilient and equitable city.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jordan Heiden
Engagement Manager
Gowanus Canal Conservancy









# Green-Wood Cemetery
# May 25, 2021
# Testimony for the New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings

Hello Chair Dromm and Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Lisa Alpert. I am the Vice President of Development and Programming at Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn. For geographical context, Green-Wood is in South Brooklyn and borders six different neighborhoods including Sunset Park and Park Slope.

In support of our FY22 capital request, I'd like to make four critical points.

#1: Green-Wood Cemetery is really big, and we are an irreplaceable asset for Brooklyn and all of NYC. We're 478 acres. That's just slightly smaller than Prospect Park. We feel a responsibility and an obligation to share this incredible resource with the community. And we embrace that responsibility every day. How do we do that?

#2: More than 250 public programs every year, including concerts, performances, and art installations. A fully-staffed education department that serves thousands of kids every year. Workforce development training. Workshops in environmental justice. Groundbreaking work with Cornell on fighting climate change in large, urban greenspaces. High school internships and more.

#3: Something incredible happened at Green-Wood last year. Last spring, when COVID hit, Green-Wood opened and staffed all four of its entrance gates, seven days a week, until 7 pm every night. That changed the number of

people who come to Green-Wood annually from 300,000 to just under 600,000 in 2020, which means Green-Wood is now better known and loved by Brooklynites than ever before.

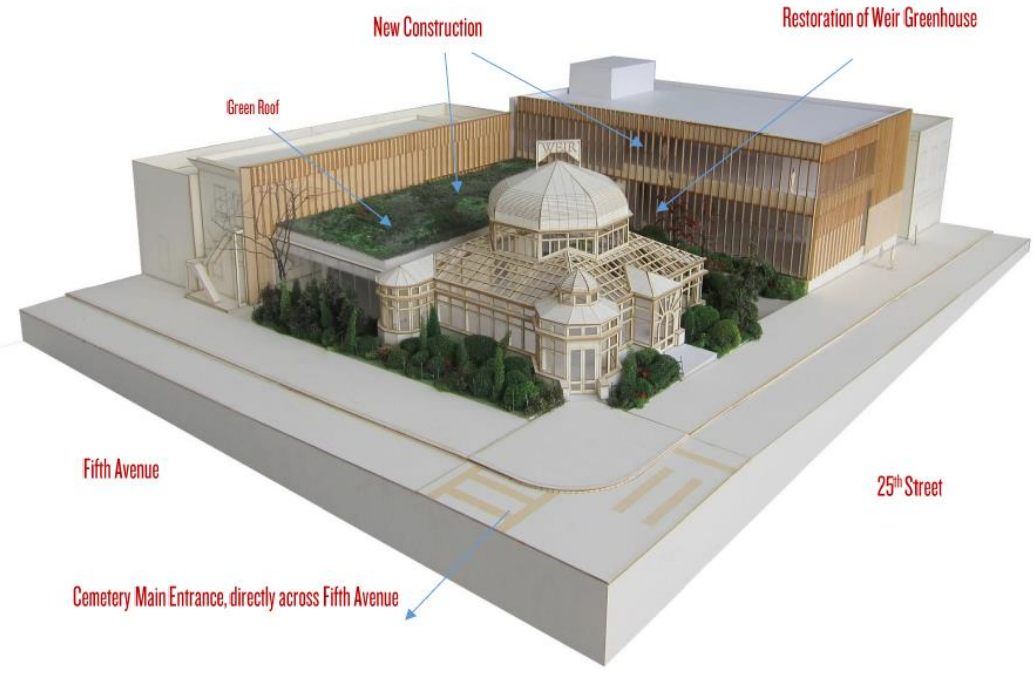
But #4: We have a **big challenge and a big opportunity**. **We currently have no indoor space for programming.** That means when it's cold, raining, or snowing, we cannot serve our community. We lose almost four months of the year. Our capital project - an Education and Welcome Center will allow year-round programming– which is especially important here in South Brooklyn, which is, culturally, significantly underserved. It will give us classroom space for education. It will provide visitor welcome and orientation. Our Center for Research will be housed here as well. We have already raised 65% of funds.

We are seeking the support of the City Council on this important capital project. Our request to the Speaker and the Brooklyn Delegation is $2MM.

Thank you.

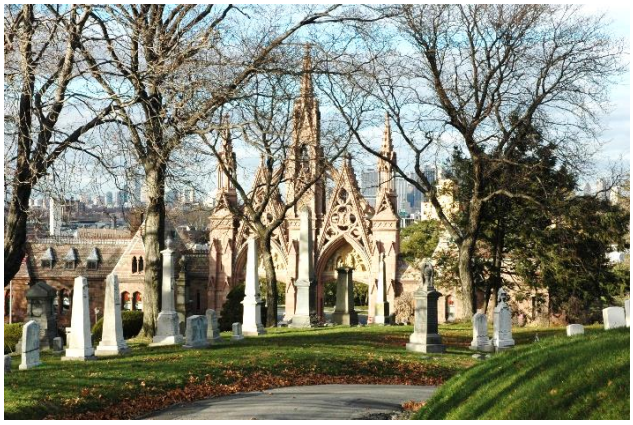
*Lisa W. Alpert*
*Vice President of Development and Programming*
*718-210-3011* | lisa_alpert@green-wood.com

The Education and Welcome Center
at Green-Wood Cemetery



**Applicant:** Green-Wood Historic Fund

**Project Name:** Education and Welcome Center



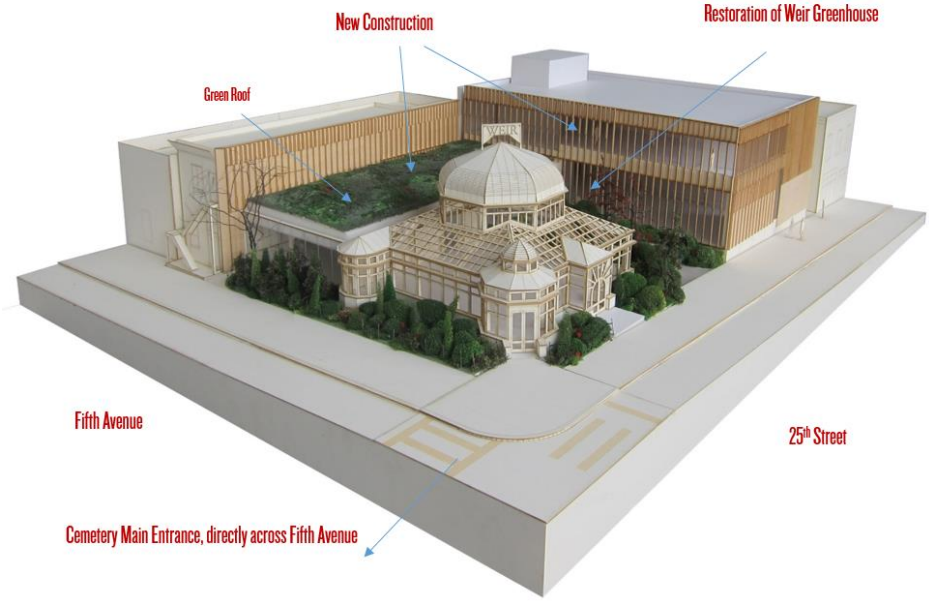
**Organizational Overview:** Green-Wood Cemetery is widely recognized as one of the most beautiful and storied burial grounds in the world. Founded in 1838, Green-Wood boasts 478 spectacular acres of hills, valleys, glacial ponds, paths, statuary and mausoleums. Its more than 570,000 permanent residents include Leonard Bernstein, Boss Tweed, Charles Ebbets, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Susan Smith McKinney Steward, James Weldon Johnson, Louis Comfort Tiffany, Civil War generals, early baseball pioneers, African Americans buried in the nineteenth-century "Freedom Lots" and tens of thousands of immigrants.

**Current Programs** at Green-Wood include **innovative arts and cultural programming** throughout the year, including art installations on the grounds, dance, concerts in the catacombs and more; **educational programs for school children ages 3 to 18**, over 250 tours and public programs annually, **workforce development** programs in masonry restoration with Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT) and Local 1 (Bricklayers and Allied Craftsworkers), and an **environmental justice** program that uses Green-Wood's 7,000 trees as a living laboratory to train Sunset Park residents on street tree care and fighting climate change. Green-Wood has an active partnership with the School of Integrative Plant Science at **Cornell University** to find ways to **mitigate climate change** across Green-Wood's grounds and create a template for sustainability for large urban green spaces by reducing the use of gas-powered mowers and introducing meadowscapes and pollinator gardens where possible.

**Capital Project Overview:** This new 20,000 sf structure will allow Green-Wood to serve Brooklynites year-round by providing indoor space for its many programs and activities. Its focus on visitor orientation will provide a welcome for more visitors and accommodate more students and class trips. The Center will complement the Victorian-era Weir greenhouse (restoration complete in 2021) with a contemporary structure to be designed by New York City-based architects, Architecture Research Office (ARO). It will include:

- Classroom Space for School Programs
- Visitor Orientation
- Exhibitions
- Flexible Space for Public Programming and Community Meetings
- Center for Research
- Expanded Arts & Culture programming
- Workforce Development Classrooms for Training

The Education and Welcome Center at Green-Wood Cemetery




| | |
|---|---|
| **Total Budget:** | $34M |
| In-Hand or Awarded: | $17.6M (71% private) |
| Still to Raise: | $16.4M |
| | |
| Board and Private: | $8.4M |
| State: | $3M |
| NYC: | $5M |

hispanicfederation

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**Testimony re: Budget Hearing**
Submitted to
New York City Committee on Finance
Submitted by Jessica Guzman Mejia, Vice President of Programs at Hispanic Federation

May 25, 2021

Thank you, Councilmember and Committee Chair Dromm, and all other committee members, for taking the time to listen to the testimony drafted by Hispanic Federation; a non-profit organization seeking to empower and advance Hispanic communities through programs and legislative advocacy.

**Addressing the Needs of the Latino Community Across New York City**

My name is Jessica Guzman Mejia and as the Vice President of Programs for Hispanic Federation, I am here to advocate for Latinos across New York City. We are thankful to the administration for including a range of priorities that support our Latino students and families. The funds NYC receives from the American Rescue Plan will also provide the city much needed additional resources to address inequities exacerbated by the pandemic. Nearly 30% of the NYC population is Latino. The pandemic wreaked havoc on our city, but most impacted communities of color. Latinos experienced COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths at an alarming rate. Many served as essential employees working low paying jobs doing manual labor, food service and cleaning in hospitals, supermarkets, public transportation, and delivery services — these jobs required their presence. They put their lives at risk to serve others and to provide for themselves and their families. Latinos have also suffered food and housing insecurity and unemployment at far higher rates than white New Yorkers since the start of the pandemic. As the City Council builds the 2021-2022 budget to aid NYC's post-pandemic recovery, we urge you to prioritize funding to boost the economic, health, and educational livelihood of the Latino community; it is essential to the city's revival.

**Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund**

We are grateful to the City Council for their commitment to funding the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund (CCNSF). As we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to support the fortification of our community, this funding will help us meet the ever-growing needs. CCNSF will enable us to strengthen direct services and programs to elevate our community. Our network of 100+ Latino community-based organizations are front-line service providers for neighborhoods and communities throughout the city. The work they have engaged in has been essential for us to get through this public health crisis.

The CCNSF funding will allow Hispanic Federation to continue supporting organizations doing important work. The Federation's COVID-19 VIDA initiative, for instance, supports the Boriken Neighborhood Health Center in East Harlem with ambulatory care services to the community without regard to a person's immigration status or ability to pay. Service is provided by staff that share the community's language and shares their culture and concerns. The VIDA initiative also funds the Urban Health Plan which provides

high-quality primary, specialty medical care and support services through community-based centers in the South Bronx and Corona, Queens.

Hispanic Federation is thrilled to continue supporting the capacity of organizations providing critical direct services as our city recovers from the pandemic. We thank the City Council for their continued support of community-based organizations and trusting us to continue facilitating the nonprofit capacity-building we've been committed to advancing for the past two decades.

**Workforce Development for Latino Advancement and NYC's Recovery**

New York City's recovery budget must seek to bolster economic opportunity by increasing investments in workforce development programs. Funds expected from the federal government should be utilized to tackle unemployment and to restore and expand programs that meet the most urgent needs of the Latino community and vulnerable New Yorkers. Successful recovery from this recession includes directing resources to communities that have experienced the greatest economic losses during the pandemic, so they can get back to work in high quality jobs and careers. When the Latino and minority communities prosper, so does NYC.

The City Council must increase funding for several workforce programs including the Bridge Program for Workforce Development. This program provides access to advanced credential and certification programs in high growth industries and was funded at $850,000 last year. When New York City initially unveiled the Career Pathways program in 2014, it promised to fund this program at $60 million. We implore you to boost funding for the Bridge Program this fiscal year. Low skill Latino jobseekers deserve access to middle-skills job training to elevate their economic status and this program meets them where they are and provides this opportunity.

The coronavirus pandemic transitioned education and many vital services to an online virtual platform. This exposed a grave digital gap within the Latino community. Not only do many individuals and families lack internet service, but they also lack the skills to utilize computers and the internet. The City Council must prioritize funding the Digital Inclusion and Literacy Initiative. Under this initiative, the Council previously designated $2 million for grassroots organizations serving immigrants, seniors, and youth. Bridging this divide will enable Latinos and immigrants to access healthcare and public benefits, navigate government systems, partake in workforce training programs, and support their children with remote learning – the benefits are expansive. These funds are more important now than ever so our community can receive the computer training and internet access required to meet an increasingly digital world. We urge you to continue funding this program and consider expanding its allocation to meet the current need.

Workforce development must also include access to ESOL classes, GED preparation, and small business technical assistance. The Job Training and Placement Initiative offers these resources as well as job placement for Latinos, other minorities, and low-income individuals. Last year, this initiative was funded at $5.7 million. We ask that the City Council maintains this funding to elevate under-employed, unemployed, and immigrant populations.

The city must utilize workforce development funds from the American Jobs Plan to invest in our most vulnerable communities. As the city begins planning for economic recovery, City Council should prioritize investments that expand the long-term economic prospects of Latinos and immigrant workers.

It is time for NYC to become a more equitable economy that focuses on exposing all residents to a variety of career options and educational training to access those careers. These efforts will bolster our economy and help NYC make the comeback it deserves.

**Healthcare and Wellness for Vulnerable Communities**

The Latino community has been tragically affected by COVID-19. Latinos have significant risk factors that heightened their rates of infection, hospitalization, and deaths. One risk factor is diabetes, which Latinos experience disproportionately and has been linked to worse COVID-19 outcomes. As the city undergoes historic vaccination efforts, the mistrust and hesitancy of many Latinos must be addressed through meaningful funding and programming. The NYC Vaccine for All Campaign has been a great push to broadcast the effectiveness and safety of the vaccines as well as website scheduling in a language our community can understand. Cultural competency is crucial when implementing programs for the Latino community. NYC must continue to fund this important program.

The pandemic has expanded the use of telemedicine and highlighted this as the way of the future. This raises concerns with the digital divide, particularly for seniors and Latinos' ability to access care and information equitably. The City Council must invest in efforts to bridge this gap by funding digital literacy programs. This gap affects not only access to healthcare, but access to education, benefits, and services.

Additionally, mental health has become a large concern due to the pandemic. We're grateful to the city's commitment to funding the Immigrant Health Initiative at $2 million in previous years and the inclusion of mental health services in this program. Now more than ever, investments in overall health services for immigrants is crucial. This fiscal year, the City Council should increase this program's funding to address the growing health disparities among immigrants resulting from the pandemic and to provide health care in a culturally sensitive and linguistically relevant manner.

To equitably address the health of Latinos in our city, we must address the social determinants of health and recognize that the foods people eat, where they live, and where government resources are directed have a profound affect on an individual's health. Prioritizing preventative health care will create a robust public health plan for New York's diverse Latino community. Rebuilding the health of our neighborhoods post-pandemic must address the varying factors that lend to underlying health conditions and historic disparities. By funding preventative health services, the Council signals that the health and wellness of Latino New Yorkers equates to a healthy and vibrant New York.

**Wrap-Around and Legal Services for Immigrants**

Immigrants serve as the backbone to the city's economy. However, almost one in six undocumented immigrants lost their jobs due to COVID-19; at the height of the pandemic, 50% of undocumented immigrants became unemployed.[1] Industries that employ the undocumented were hardest hit during the pandemic. New York City experienced a 46% drop in entertainment and recreation and a 40% drop in food services and accommodations. 20% of undocumented workers are employed in these industries; 15% were employed in the construction industry which was also hard hit by the pandemic.[2] They were

[1] https://www.thecity.nyc/immigration/2021/4/20/22394875/declining-immigration-threatens-new-york-covid-comeback

[2] http://fiscalpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Final_Pandemic-Recession-Nov.pdf?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=fce2dc0e-6750-4706-8255-1bd0b8fbb674

ineligible for most government aid and instead depended on food pantries, friends, and understanding landlords.

Due to the pandemic, 80% of the businesses working with the Business Center for New Americans have closed. Many of the businesses will struggle to make a comeback. Considering that Immigrants founded more than half of all small businesses in NYC, the City Council should create an emergency cash assistance fund for immigrants and immigrant-owned small businesses that were left out of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) program and other relief efforts. [3]

Additionally, the city must sustain funding for immigration legal services. Our community is recovering not only from the pandemic, but the Trump Administration's rhetoric, detention and deportation activities which instilled fear amongst immigrants. To continue protecting immigrants, the City Council must maintain funding for immigration legal services including $28.4 million allocated last year for CUNY Citizenship Now, the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project, and the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative, among other programs. These programs provide critical legal services to navigate a complex system.

At a time when many immigrant families need assistance due the disproportionate hardships and health risks from the COVID-19 pandemic, the New York City Council must remain committed to funding critical services that empowers our immigrant neighbors.

## EDUCATION

A historic education budget allocation was presented this session. The New York State budget included 100% fair student funding for schools, technology literacy trainings financial resources, expansion of restorative justice socio-emotional supports, and summer enrichment opportunities for recovery from the pandemic. The funding from the Elementary & Secondary Schools Emergency (ESSER) and American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds will also provide the city additional resources to address the educational inequities exacerbated from the health crisis. This is a pivotal time for our city to move beyond re-imagining education to making an equitable and just education system a reality. Hispanic Federation strongly believes that these additional funding recommendations can support this vision. We recommend and additional $5M to expand restorative justice for social emotional learning at elementary schools; increase funding by at least $100M for Summer Rising to increase the number of students beyond 190,000; provide specific funding allocations to increase postsecondary and career readiness; direct funding allocation for parent/family empowerment supports to re-engage families as schools reopen; and $85M to address the preschool special education class shortage and provide salary parity to teachers of preschool special education classes at CBOs.

**Restorative Justice for Social-emotional Learning**

An allocation of $12M provides middle and high schools with additional resources to expand restorative justice practices. However, this initiative must include elementary schools as we move towards reopening and beyond. Through the new initiative, Bridge to School, all elementary schools will receive support to develop social-emotional learning practices, however, these schools can greatly benefit from further support on conflict resolutions that follow restorative justice practices that middle and high

[3] https://nycfuture.org/research/under-threat-and-left-out

schools will receive. Suspensions did significantly decrease this past year by 20% and restorative approaches were expanded to support students during remote learning.[4] This does not suggest a direct causation; however, it presents an opportunity to continue improving such practices. Adding funding for restorative justice across New York City schools will challenge traditional disciplinary actions that disproportionately affect students of color. We strongly recommend to not wait any longer and expand financial support to include restorative justice practices at elementary schools.

**Expand Funding for Summer Rising**

"Summer Rising is New York's free summer plan for **any** child in grades K-12 who wants to participate."[5] This is the introduction to the description of the Summer Rising program, nonetheless, the budget allocated ensures a seat only for 190,000 students, which is less than 20% of the current students enrolled in the system. This summer can be a critical time for many of our families to offer support to eventually transition to full in-person classrooms. We must ensure that schools receive the necessary funding to sustain a summer program that is meant for all students. Not including the necessary resources will hinder the quality of programs available and will leave students out without possibly any other options. More importantly, promising to provide a seat for summer learning and then not offering it, will increase the distrust, already present for many families from communities of color, to believe that that our system is not listening to their needs. We urge the city leadership to increase the necessary funding to provide high-quality and expanded seats for all to participate in Summer Rising.

**Specific Funding Allocation for Postsecondary/Career**

Now more than ever, postsecondary and career readiness is interconnected with economic opportunity. We must ensure that as we return to in-person learning, our students are presented with more opportunities for advancement. Redesigned courses can create more clarity on pathways that lead to thriving careers. Integrating work-based learning supports through students' earlier years in middle and high school is also critical to ensure the long-term success for our students. We believe that the city must work with school districts to ensure specific funding addresses the postsecondary and career development of historically underserved students through these initiatives. Across the nation, colleges were seeing less numbers of incoming students last fall 2020.[6] Particularly, community colleges saw a 16% decrease of new students enrolling at their campus. This can be very harmful in the coming years for students from underserved communities who are more likely to attend these colleges. It is imperative that we not lose sight of these issues and ensure we provide funding that will support our communities in postsecondary and career readiness.

**Specific Funding Allocation for Parent/Family Empowerment**

Although, schools have improved family communication, they need to continue bolstering efforts to reach families, particularly undocumented and mixed-status families who historically have been fearful

[4] https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/5/14/21259191/suspensions-nyc-schools-plummet#:~:text=From%20July%20through%20December%202019,offenses%20%E2%80%94%20decreased%20nearly%2016%25.
[5] https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/summer
[6] https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/16/us/community-college-enrollment-drop.html

to reach out for support. Critical changes happening at a moment's notice have not reached Latino families and other communities of color, making it difficult for families to make important timely decisions. Additionally, when supplementary resources are available, but there is no intentional outreach, these resources do not serve their purpose. School districts and the city must invest in supports that engage families. To encourage family engagement, schools must involve trusted community-based organizations, parent groups, and/or other companies that disseminate information in various languages across the city and through a variation of mediums, including texting, radio, TV, and print. We ask for clear funding allocations that support these programs and gives school districts the necessary funding to reach out and engage families.

**Preschool Special Education**

We recommend that the final FY '22 budget include $85M to address the preschool special education class shortage and provide salary parity to teachers of preschool special education classes at CBOs, as recommended in the City Council's response to the preliminary budget. The Executive Budget includes a new investment of $22M in FY '22, going up to $88M in FY '23, for preschool special education. While we are pleased to see an investment in preschool special education, there is no funding slated for FY '22 to address the preschool special education class shortage, which has left children without the classes they need, or to provide salary parity to teachers – and no commitment to providing salary parity even in FY '23.[7] Under the City's salary parity agreement, other early childhood teachers will receive salary increases in October 2021, leading preschool special class teachers to flock to general education classes and leaving children with disabilities without teachers. Preschoolers with significant disabilities should not have to wait another year for the City to make needed investments to meet their needs.

As our communities focus on rebuilding, we must intentionally work to meet the needs of communities of color. Hispanic Federation asks for your leadership to ensure the needs of our community are addressed. New York City must continue to prioritize funding that addresses expanded support for Latinos and minority communities in the areas of workforce development, health, and education. We look forward to working with you and we thank you for hearing our statement today.

[7] https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/1/30/21121121/nearly-2-000-nyc-children-with-disabilities-could-be-stranded-without-pre-k-seats-this-spring

May 25, 2021

“Play Fair for Parks”

New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing

My name is Tony Simone, Director of External Affairs at Hudson River Park (HRPK) Friends.

Good afternoon Council Members. Thank you Council Member Koo, Speaker Johnson, Council Member Dromm, and Council Members for supporting Hudson River Park & for funding our discretionary funding requests. This important funding supports the Park’s free environmental education programming, our free summer virtual and in-person programming and our volunteer efforts to help maintain the Park. Our park environmental education programs serve students and New Yorkers from all five boroughs.

HRPK Friends is the main fundraising and advocacy partner of Hudson River Park. As you know, Hudson River Park is the beloved, waterfront park that runs 4+ miles along Manhattan’s west side, from Chambers Street and ending at West 59 Street. Hudson River Park Friends consists of several thousand Friends from across the city. Over 17 million visitors came to Hudson River Park before the pandemic and during the pandemic we saw the Park full with New Yorkers enjoying nature during this crisis.

Throughout this pandemic, New Yorkers and even visitors from beyond the city, have found solace in Hudson River Park. The Park has been an outdoor refuge, office during warmer weather, a public gym and place for New Yorkers to walk and run to maintain their physical and mental health during this traumatic time.

In the greatest city in the world, it is essential that our city adequately fund Parks at a sustained and consistent level in the city budget every year.

During this pandemic, HRPK Friends has had to reduce our budget and the Park has had to cut back on maintenance, limit volunteer horticulture activity, and negotiate rent reductions with tenants due to mandatory business closures during the lockdown, negatively impacting the Park’s overall budget.

1. HRPK Friends during this challenging health crisis has been part of the Parks and Open Space NYC (POSP NYC) Coalition.
2. And in the midst of the dire need for open space and parks during the pandemic, NYC Parks suffered a 14% budget cut, amounting to $84M, in FY2020. This left NYC Parks dramatically under-resourced. The loss of seasonal staff, PEP officers and gardeners, along with a hiring freeze, has been devastating for parks workers trying to cover the 14% of NYC land that is under NYC Parks jurisdiction.
3. 2020 parks conditions were the worst on record since NYC Parks began recording them in 2004. The biggest issues were accessibility (parks and comfort station closures), safety and park conditions (trash, lack of landscape maintenance, etc.).
4. NYC Parks is chronically underfunded and understaffed: there are not nearly enough City Park Maintenance Workers, Gardeners, Urban Park Rangers or PEP officers. 300+ PEP officers are

expected to patrol 14% of NYC – in the summers, they're pulled to waterfront locations and beaches, and large parks suffer from overuse and lack of oversight.

5. NYC cannot replace parks workers with volunteers – NYC needs a fully funded and fully staffed Department of Parks and Recreation.
6. The proposed budget does not return to pre-pandemic levels: staffing levels, the Parks Equity Initiative, and basic maintenance like tree pruning/sidewalk repair/tree stump removal/invasive species control are not addressed.
7. Restoring the NYC Parks budget is the bare minimum. The majority of these positions are not baselined, which means they must be renewed every year by elected officials and do not guarantee parks workers their jobs. We need to move beyond a cycle-to-cycle funding model. 1% or more of the city budget must be allocated for NYC Parks.
8. There remains a hiring freeze at NYC Parks leaving permanent staff nearly 200 short – a huge issue.

Hudson River Park, as all open spaces and parks throughout the city, have an encountered a surge of visitors and the need for increased maintenance, more PEP safety officers, horticulture staff, volunteers and costly infrastructure repairs. Our beloved parks have been recognized by the public as essential places of refuge during these difficult times. Fabulous parks are one of the hallmarks of a great city; and this city needs to support our parks at a higher level than it does now to compete with the great cities of the US and the world.

**TESTIMONY**

**New York City Council Committee on Finance**
**Jointly with the Committee on Contracts and the Subcommittee on Capital Budget**
**Fiscal Year 2022 Preliminary Budget Hearing**
**Tuesday, May 25th, 2021**

Submitted by:
MJ Okma
Policy and Campaign Strategist
Human Services Council of New York

## Introduction:

Good afternoon Chair Dromm, Chair Rosenthal and members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance and Subcommittee on Capital Budget. My name is MJ Okma, and I am the Policy and Campaign Strategist at the Human Services Council (HSC), a membership organization representing over 170 human services providers in New York City. HSC serves our membership as a coordinating body, advocate, and intermediary between the human services sector and government. We take on this work so that our members can focus on running their organizations and providing critical direct support to New Yorkers. These are the nonprofits that support our City's children, seniors, those experiencing homelessness, people with disabilities, individuals who are incarcerated or otherwise involved in the justice system, immigrants, and individuals coping with substance abuse and other mental health and behavioral challenges.

The Fiscal Year 2022 budget is a time to take that all into account previous cuts during the height of the COVID-19 budget deficit and outdated systems that do not serve our communities in order to reassess and rethink what and who our City values.

Together, we have already achieved on major victory. After the City Council demanded the restoration of the Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) Funding Initiative in the FY22 Preliminary Budget response, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced the addition of $57 million to restore the ICR cut in FY21 and baselining the full $91 million to sustain the program for future years as part of his FY22 Executive Budget. Thank you for championing this issue! Together, we must ensure this funding makes it into the Adopted Budget.

However, the need for the FY22 budget to invest in the essential human services workforce remains. It is critical for the Adopted FY22 budget to include restoration of ICR funding as well as the following core investments in the human services workers:

- The restoration of the COLA on the personnel services line of all human services contracts at a rate of 3% at a cost of $48 million for FY22.

- A plan for the administration to promote wage equity in the public sector by correcting the pay disparities the human services workforce experience, as outlined in the City Council's FY22 Preliminary Budget Response.

Investments in the human services workforce are critical. New York City has suffered a net-loss of over 44,000 human services jobs since last year due to underfunded contracts and compounding cuts at the City and State level. On top of this massive net loss of jobs, City-contracted human services workers, on average, make less than half compared to those outside of the sector with similar credentials and experience. Our workers are invaluable to the health and well-being of the City and they deserve to be compensated fairly.

Underfunding human services contracts come at a direct cost for communities most impacted by COVID-19 due to income inequality, structural racism, and ableism. The stark reality is that long before this crisis hit, the City government has asked us to do more with less by the direct cost of implementing contracted programs by an average of 20%. Because of this, 68% of New York City providers anticipated not being able to meet their pre-COVID-19 demands for services.

It is impossible to ignore that our services and workers are invaluable to the health and wellbeing of the City and the FY22 budget must reflect this.

## State of the Human Services Workforce:

Workers in New York City's nonprofit human services sector make less than half compared to those outside of the sector with similar credentials and experience. While the human services sector can leverage private and philanthropic dollars and funding from the City, State, and federal government to create dynamic programs at a bargain, the pay for these services needs to be sustainable. **When elected officials refuse to listen to providers and drastically undervalue the services they are contracted to provide, it is the human services workforce, which is 82% women and 80% people of color, who are disproportionately impacted. New York City underfunds the direct service costs in human services contracts by at least 20% pre-COVID-19 and that gap is growing, creating the desperate need for funding for human services to be restored and bolstered.**

The City is not getting a deal by chronically underfunding homeless shelters, foster care agencies, food pantries, and senior centers; it is directly harming the low wage workers who keep these programs running. Eighteen percent of New York City human services providers were insolvent before New York City even saw its first case of COVID-195 and 80% of the largest human services organizations have budgets that are 90% or more dependent on government funding. When these contracts drastically underfund programs, set rock bottom rates per services unit, and require high mandated targets, the City is dependent on low-wage workers to fill in these gaps.

The average human services worker makes only $32,700 in New York City**, far below what the 2019 New York City Self-Sufficiency Standard found to be required to meet the basic needs and expenses of living. The median cost for rent in New York City has gone up over 20% since 2010[vii] yet in that same period the average pay for human services workers has increased less than any other low-pay industry in the City including retail, restaurants, and personal/laundry services. Pay is so low that over 60% of the human services workforce qualified for some form of public assistance themselves.**

The human services workforce has been toiling under City-contracted poverty wages long before

the devastating effects of COVID-19. Then, instead of being met with tangible support, over 44,000 human services jobs were loss due to cuts at the City and State level.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the City committed to provide emergency pay for some residential workers. The initiative covered wages for certain personnel at residential settings from March 1 - June 3 and was only communicated through personal communications from the City on a contract-by-contract basis under DHS, ACS, HRA, and DOHMH rather than uniform guidance. This program also only covered frontline workers at residential programs and outlined extremely specific qualifications personnel needed to meet to qualify, which left out many essential onsite jobs including maintenance, cooks, drivers, and security. The City also would not allow providers to make the funding retroactive, meaning providers had to provide emergency pay prior to approval. This meant if providers were denied, which was quite common due to the confusion surrounding this program, they would have to pay these salary expenses out of pocket despite already providing services under grossly underfunded city contracts. The lessons learned from this program are that emergency pay must be compressive, fully funded, and covering all city-contracted human services workers who were unable to do their jobs remotely retroactive to the beginning of New York's stay at home order.

**Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, low-wage contracted human services workers have put their lives and their families at risk to provide crucial services to communities in crisis. The city was also unable to provide PPE and cleaning supplies early in the pandemic, placing workers and their families in even greater danger. The FY22 budget is an opportunity to reverse course, starting with bringing back the COLA for city-contracted human services workers at a rate of at least 3% and providing comprehensive emergency pay.**

**Renewing the COLA on the personnel services line of all human services contracts at a rate of 3% would cost an estimated $48 million for FY22.**

## Conclusion:

The City Council saw the crisis facing the human services sector and fought for the ICR Funding Initiative and the human services workforce in FY20 and again to preserve this program in FY22, resulting in the restoration of funds. However, the human services workforce still needs your support and advocacy. There has been a net loss of 44,000 human services jobs, the COLA for human services workers was not renewed while they were on the frontlines of COVID-19.

It is critical for the Adopted FY22 budget to include restoration of ICR funding as well as the following core investments in the human services workers:

- The restoration of the COLA on the personnel services line of all human services contracts at a rate of 3% at a cost of $48 million for FY22.

- A plan for the administration to promote wage equity in the public sector by correcting the pay disparities the human services workforce experience, as outlined in the City Council's FY22 Preliminary Budget Response.

Thank you so much for fighting for investments for the human services workforce in the FY22 Preliminary Budget Response and securing the restoration of ICR funding. We greatly value our partnership with you and the City Council and look forward to working together to achieve pay equity for human services workers.

MJ Okma, Policy and Campaign Strategist
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**Homeless Services United's Written Testimony on NYC FY22 Executive Budget**

**Submitted to the NYC Council Finance Committee on May 25th, 2021**

My name is Eric Lee and I'm the director of policy and planning at Homeless Services United. Homeless Services United (HSU) is a coalition representing mission-driven, homeless service providers in New York City. HSU advocates for expansion of affordable housing and prevention services and for immediate access to safe, decent, emergency and transitional housing, outreach and drop-in services for homeless New Yorkers. Thank you Chair Dromm and members of the Finance Committee for allowing us to submit written testimony.

As COVID rates fall across the City and the path to reopening the City is finally within grasp, the City is at a pivotal point in the recovery, where investments in essential services can ensure a robust recovery for all New Yorkers.

HSU is grateful to Chair Dromm, Speaker Johnson, Chair Levin, the Finance and General Welfare Committees and the entire City Council for your continued leadership and support of the non-profit sector. We are extremely grateful for your leadership in pushing the Mayor to fully restore funding for the Indirect Cost Rate Initiative (ICR). Without this funding, non-profits providing essential services to the City, including homeless shelters, foster care, and senior adult services would have faced significant budget gaps which would have negatively affected the quality and delivery of critical services.

**Strengthening the Non-Profit Workforce**

Building on this commitment to support the work of non-profits, Homeless Services United strongly supports the adoption of two other priorities from the Council's FY22 Preliminary Budget Response: to **enact a 3% COLA for Human Services workers ($48M**) and ***"calls for the Administration to reevaluate public sector wages across the board and plan to correct the disparities…. to map out a plan and create a fund to achieve wage equity over the course of this Financial Plan."***[1]

Homeless Services United supports increasing wages for ALL human services workers and frontline staff in our programs. For decades, the City has paid our non-profit workers a fraction of what they pay their own City employees for the same work, and that must change.

Homeless services contracts should provide good wages and benefits for all our staff with sufficient funding to pay for it. To achieve this, **City contracting agencies like DHS must reopen model budget negotiations utilizing a comprehensive wage scale informed by industry standards to ensure contract budgets and funding reflective of the cost of labor and services provided. Paramount to any wage reform efforts for the non-profit workforce, the Council must set aside funding in the FY22 Budget to cover the cost of increased wages. Without additional funding to support these efforts, should the Council pass wage related legislation such as Intro 2006 which mandates a prevailing wage and**

[1] The New York City Council, *The New York City Council's Response to the Fiscal 2022 Preliminary Budget and Fiscal 2021 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report*, Corey Johnson, Daniel Dromm, Helen Rosenthal, Latonia R. McKinney, page 6. New York City, April 7, 2021 https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2021/04/Fiscal-2022-Preliminary-Budget-Response-1.pdf

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**benefits for shelter security guards but lacks a funding mechanism, nonprofits would either have to cut services or wages of other staff lines to balance their program budgets. The Council must ensure funding commitments precede any new wage mandates or else the DHS budget will inevitably be balanced on the backs of homeless clients and frontline workers.**

**Recognizing that efforts to comprehensively evaluate and raise wages sector wide will take considerable planning, the Council's response also calls for $48 million to baseline a COLA for human services workers in the FY22 Executive Budget.** Passage of this would **provide immediate relief to our non-profit workforce while allowing the Administration to proceed with the utmost care to ensure that the City can deliver meaningful relief for our non-profit workforce while strengthening the social services safety net.**

**Investments in keeping New Yorkers Housed**

Paramount to finding and retaining permanent housing is the ability to pay rent. **We are grateful to Speaker Johnson and Council Member Levin for announcing they will bring Intro. 146 to a vote at the May 27th Stated Meeting. This landmark piece of legislation urge will increase CityFHEPS voucher rent levels to Fair Market Rent (FMR). We urge the Council to Pass Intro 146 and include sufficient funding in the FY22 Executive Budget to cover the increased cost of the voucher.** Low rent amounts of CityFHEPS vouchers is the single greatest weakness to the efficacy of the program. Despite the exhaustive efforts of shelter housing staff, far too many families and individuals are stuck in shelter holding CityFHEPS shopping letters month after month because the vouchers simply don't pay enough.

As **Commissioner Banks testified** *"the elimination of the Advantage rental assistance program and the resulting expositional increase in family homelessness illustrated* ***the folly of fighting homelessness with no permanent housing****."* **Through enacting Intro. 146, the Council will create a viable pathway to permanent housing, shortening the length of time that families and individuals suffer the traumatization of homelessness, and creating an effective tool to stabilize the housing of more New Yorkers in the community at risk of homelessness.**

HSU would also like to thank the Council and Commissioner Banks for the City's recent expansion of eviction prevention and benefits access assistance. The Human Resources Administration quickly stood up new programs with eviction prevention providers and other community based organizations to assist New Yorkers to apply for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funding to stabilize their housing. While funding to pay arrears is key to preventing evictions, resources are only helpful if households can access them, and the City's commitment to fund community-based non-profits to outreach and assist households will make it possible.

**Preserving and Enhancing Homeless Services**

HSU is hopeful that the Administration will also look to preserve the gains made assisting street homeless New Yorkers. We are heartened by Commissioner Bank's testimony regarding the Mayor's commitment to bring online an additional 1,000 low barrier beds to help this population, and **we hope the City will commit to continue funding the hotel stabilization beds for street homeless individuals currently funded through FEMA funds set to end in the coming months.** Continued support of these

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stabilization units will grant providers more time to work with clients to transition to permanent housing rather than risking returning to the streets and subways.

Given the current opportunities before the City from Federal relief and expanded Section 8 and Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV), **we urge the administration to consider how to best target available resources and vouchers to minimize additional relocations and displacements of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness, whether they're families in HRA domestic violence shelters or runaway and homeless youth in DYCD shelters set to "timeout" and have to transfer to the DHS system, or are currently in DHS stabilization or de-densification hotels or shelters set to close**. In this way the City can avoid further traumatization and upheaval in the lives of the unstably housed. The Administration should also consider **how to make current or new vouchers work for Long-Term Stayers in shelter who either don't qualify for a voucher or do but can't realistically use them (e.g., working poor over-income eligibility, households with only 1 member with legal status, small families, etc.)**. With the Federal Government's influx of relief, the City has the opportunity to widen eligibility and increase assistance levels to help households who previously had fallen through the cracks of existing assistance programs.

To shore up underserved needs of students residing in DHS family shelters, HSU recommends that a portion of **Federal relief funding earmarked for the NYC Department of Education (DOE) be utilized to hire 150 Student in Temporary Housing Community Coordinators.** Despite the hard work of many educators and DOE staff members, including the DOE's Students in Temporary Housing (STH) team, the pandemic has worsened the inequities that have long existed for students in shelter.

The current supports are simply not enough. Addressing the barriers to school attendance and helping students reconnect with school will require a targeted strengths-based outreach approach with qualified, trained DOE professionals on the ground at the City's shelters who can listen to concerns of families, help them navigate DOE's complex school sytem, and support them on issues ranging from transportation to enrollment and technology to special education. Every shelter should have DOE staff qualified and equipped to address barriers to school attendance, support students' education needs, and connect them with available services.

As the City's return to normalcy finally feels within reach, it is through robust Federal relief that we find ourselves with much brighter prospects than those included in the Preliminary Budget. At this pivotal moment for the City, expansive investments in key areas will ensure a strong recovery for all New Yorkers. We can do it through strengthening the human services workforce who 2.5 million New Yorkers rely on for services, expanding rental assistance to prevent a tsunami of eviction cases and create a direct pathway out of shelter, and strengthen services for those in shelter rely on them while they work towards attaining permanent housing. Through strengthening the safety net which the City relied on through the darkest days of the pandemic, the Council can ensure the brightest of tomorrows for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. Should you have any questions, feel free to reach out via email at elee@hsunited.org or phone at (646) 515-8053.




# Testimony before the New York City Council Finance Committee – Executive Budget Hearing

Submitted by
Christopher Treiber
Associate Executive Director for Children's Services

On behalf of
INTERAGENCY COUNCIL of
Developmental Disabilities Agencies, Inc.
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May 25, 2021




Good afternoon Council Member Dromm and members of the Finance Committee, my name is Christopher Treiber, and I am the Associate Executive Director of Children's Services for The Interagency Council of Developmental Disabilities Agencies, Inc. The (IAC) was formed in 1977 as a not-for-profit membership organization. Comprised of voluntary service providers supporting children and adults with developmental disabilities in the greater metro-New York area, IAC currently represents over 130 member agencies and organizations helping more than 100,000 individuals and their families in New York City, Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Rockland, Putnam and Orange counties. Support programs and services offered by IAC member agencies include early intervention, Pre-K for All, special education preschool and school-age programs, as well as residential services, job training and employment programs, day habilitation programs, home and community-based supports, recreation, clinical and health services, and an array of supports to families. The IAC has a long history of working in partnership with the New York City Department of Education to improve the quality of services and programs for young children with developmental disabilities and their families.

On behalf of the IAC and our preschool special education provider's I would like to thank the New York City Council Finance Committee for holding this public hearing and for the opportunity to provide testimony here today.

My testimony will focus on Preschool Special Education and the children and families who depend on these critical services.

Special education preschools or 4410 programs provide special education services to children with disabilities ages 3-5. Many of these young children have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, or other developmental disabilities.

These children live in your neighborhood and would have attended a 3-K for All or Pre-K for All program if she or he did not have a disability. Many of the children in our 4410 programs come from communities of color that have been disproportionately devastated by COVID and represent underserved children in NYC. A high percent of our 4410 students are eligible for free lunch, and our schools serve children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and are financially insecure. Our schools serve children in foster care and families who are recent immigrants and undocumented individuals.

Every child who attends a 4410 special education preschool are public school children and they are placed in our schools only after a determination has been made by a local Committee on Special Education or Committee on Preschool Special Education that there is no other education option for these students.

These 4410 programs work in partnership with the NYC DOE to serve many of New York City's most vulnerable children and help the city meet its legal responsibility under the Federal Law to provide a "free and appropriate public education" (FAPE) to all New York City children regardless of disability.

Based on information in the Mayors Preliminary Management Report – p. 184.
https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2021/doe.pdf

We know that **86% of all preschool students with disabilities in NYC** attend 4410 programs and the NYC DOE serves about 14%. Our 4410 preschools are NYC preschool schools for children with the highest levels of educational need, but they have not received funding to meet those challenges. In the past ten years our 4410 programs have received only a 10% increase in tuition funding while public school districts have received a 40% increase in education funding during the same time. This inequity in funding is making it nearly impossible for our 4410 programs to recruit and retain certified special education teachers.

**Salary Parity Agreement In New York City - A Major Accomplishment but a Nightmare for 4410 preschool Special Education programs**

The salary parity agreement is a significant accomplishment for the teachers in the early childhood CBOs in New York City, but our 4410 teachers have been left out and that has had a devastating impact on our 4410 preschool programs. Our schools can no longer recruit and retain certified special education teachers and the result is that the majority of teachers in our 4410 schools are now the lowest paid early childhood teachers in NYC.

Every certified teacher at an early childhood education programs in NYC (except for 4410 teachers) have received the following salary increases over the past two years and scheduled to receive another increase in October of 2021.

| Increase Schedule | With Master's Degree | With Bachelor's Degree |
|---|---|---|
| 10/1/19 | $53,581 | $48,372 |
| 10/1/20 | $62,295 | $55,651 |
| 10/1/21 | $68,652 | $61,070 |

**We are calling on the City Council in New York City to address this exclusion and to provide the funds to ensure that certified special education teachers in 4410 preschool special education programs receive the same pay raises as all other early childhood teachers in New York City.**

We want you to know that our 4410 programs started providing in-person instruction during the summer of 2020 and all our preschools have been open and providing in-person instruction since September. All the teachers in our 4410 programs have been working daily providing in-person instruction and have risked their lives throughout the pandemic to make sure that the young children with disabilities receive in-person instruction.

Our teachers are the hidden heroes of this pandemic. They visited children at home and brought supplies to the students, traveled to city homeless shelters, and delivered computer devices and materials to children and worked tirelessly to completely transform a special education service system overnight with little support or guidance

from New York City. All our 4410 teachers have been teaching both in-person and virtually all year unlike teachers in many other public-school settings.

However, our teachers have not been treated as heroes. They believe they have been forgotten by the city. We ask that you not forget our preschool children with developmental disabilities and their teachers who provide critical special education services. The City Council prioritized ensuring that all early childhood teachers in NYC continued to receive the salary increases based on the parity agreement despite the budget challenges last year caused by the pandemic. In October of 2020, every early childhood teacher in New York City received a salary increase of almost 9,000 dollars - and in October of 2021 they will receive another raise of more than 6,000 dollars. Every Early Childhood Teacher in New York City **EXCEPT OUR 4410 TEACHERS!**

Teachers in 4410 special education preschools are all certified special education teachers and are paid almost 40% less than public school teachers. Based on State education data the average teacher salary disparity exceeds more than 37,000 dollars a year.

The *"Tale of Two Teachers"* illustrates the significant difference in salary and benefits for a certified special education teacher in our school and a teacher in public school.

# A Tale of Two Teachers



- I teach in a 4410 or 853 State Approved Special Education program
- I am a certified special education teacher with 5 years experience
- I get paid $51,000 dollars a year*
- I work 12 months a year
- I have to pay for my medical insurance, and I have no pension.
- My average fringe benefit is worth 23 % of my annual salary*



- I teach in a public schoolSpecial Education program
- I am a certified special education teacher with 5 years experience
- I get paid $87,000 dollars a year*
- I work 10 months a year
- I will get lifetime medical insurance and a full pension.
- My fringe benefit is worth is 63.89% of my annual salary*

*Data provided by the New York State Education Department

***InterAgency Council 2019***

This salary disparity makes it extremely hard for our schools to retain their teachers and recruit new teachers and many currently have teacher vacancies. Our schools are facing a staffing crisis that will continue to get worse. Right now, our schools have enough teachers to staff their classroom because of the limited numbers of students in school each day. However, If the children come back to school full-time in September 2021 our preschool 4410 programs will not have enough teachers to open all their existing classrooms and preschool students may be forced to sit at home.

The New York State Regulations of the Commissioner of Education and Article 47 of the New York City Childcare Regulations require that children in our 4410 preschools are taught by a certified special education teacher. It is important to remember that only a certified special education teacher can implement an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Our children have a right to have a certified special education teacher in front of their classroom, but it is almost impossible to guarantee this anymore.

The struggle to recruit and retain certified teachers is making it increasingly difficult for our 4410 schools to continue to provide a quality education to our students without access to a certified special education teacher. We have schools that are considering closure simply because they can no longer recruit new special education teachers.

Our schools have a high number of teachers who leave each year. We have many students who have more than one teacher in one year. ***When a teacher leaves it is devastating to the child but for a student with a developmental disability it can be heartbreaking. How do you tell a student her teacher left because the public school pays more?***

School districts can pay their teachers between $30,000 and $40,000 dollars more than our schools. As a result, children with the highest levels of educational need in the state are being taught by new and inexperienced teachers.

Preschool 4410 programs are closing at an alarming rate. In the past 5 years more than 63 preschool special education programs have closed. 34 of them in the five boroughs of New York City. One of our 4410 programs Volunteers for America closed their preschool program in Staten Island in December. This preschool had been in the Staten Island neighborhood for more than 30 years. We are losing high quality programs because they can no longer afford to stay open due to the inequity in funding and the significant challenges recruiting teaching staff for their schools. We are genuinely concerned that if nothing is done to address this funding inequity more preschools will close their doors and children with developmental disabilities will wait for seats.

New York State and New York City must prioritize providing fiscal support for 4410 schools who serve New York City's most vulnerable children and ensure that there is a certified special education teacher in every classroom. If New York State fails to act, the impact of this pandemic on our children with developmental disabilities will last for years and they will suffer the greatest consequences.

The NYC Council need to address the teacher salary disparity by increasing funding for teacher salaries to assure pay parity.

We want to remind the council members that the children with developmental disabilities who attend 4410 programs – ARE YOUR CHILDREN. Our Kids are Your kids!

4410 preschool programs are your early childhood programs. Our preschools serve 86% of all New York City children age 3-5 who need preschool special education services. They are a vital resource to the city, but they have not been treated that way!

**We would like to know why children who attend 4410 preschool special education programs are not given the same financial resources and support as children who attend their local public schools when their parents pay the same taxes!**

**Why are the children who attend these special schools not afforded the same rights as a child in a public school to a certified special education teacher?**

In the Mayors Executive Budget for FY 22 there is 22 million dollars to support preschool special education and in FY 23 there is another 88 million dollars but not one dollar is allocated to address salary parity for 4410 special education teachers.

**THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE!**

IT IS TIME TO ADDRESS SALARY PARITY FOR TEACHERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESCHOOLS IN THIS YEAR'S BUDGET!

New York City must prioritize providing fiscal support for 4410 schools who serve New York City's most vulnerable children and ensure that there is a certified special education teacher in every classroom and a preschool special education seat for every preschool child with a disability who needs one.

We thank the city council for recognizing the need to address salary parity for 4410 teachers and urge you to include 85 million dollars in the final budget for preschool special education and to commit to salary parity for our teachers.

Thank you.

To: New York City Council, Committee on Finance
From: Melissa Peterson, Supervising Attorney, The Door's Legal Services Center
Re: City Council Funding for Unaccompanied Minors
Date: May 25, 2021

The Door is a comprehensive youth development organization that has been supporting vulnerable youth in New York City since 1972. Each year, we serve nearly 11,000 young people between the ages of twelve and twenty-four, providing them with a variety of resources, including healthcare, education, supportive housing, career development, mental health counseling and legal assistance. Many of these services are provided on site, but during COVID we are operating a hybrid model of both remote and in-person services. At The Door, we emphasize empowering and engaging the young people we serve, and we are committed to creating a safe, equitable and inclusive place for our young people and staff. The Door's unique and all-inclusive approach has become a model for other like organizations locally and nationally.

The Door's Legal Services Center receives funding from The New York City Council as part of our work in the ICARE collaborative, a coalition that provides legal representation to unaccompanied minors who are in removal proceedings before the New York Immigration Court. The young people we represent have come to the U.S. seeking humanitarian relief, whether it's because of abuse, neglect or abandonment by their parent(s), or because they have suffered persecution or other forms of violence in their home countries. Our work ensures that these young people's rights are respected and that they have a fair opportunity to seek the relief to which they are entitled. The U.S. immigration system is complex and incredibly challenging to navigate, even for lawyers. Despite this, immigrants have no right to legal representation in immigration court. This means that regardless of their age, they must represent themselves *pro se* if they do not have access to a lawyer. The Door's work as part of the ICARE coalition is thus imperative to keeping children safe from deportation because without legal representation, their deportation is nearly certain.

*Challenges Children and Youth Face in Immigration Court*

Even at its best, the U.S. immigration system is incredibly complex and challenging to navigate. 2020 was perhaps the most challenging year-to-date for immigrants facing deportation. Four years' worth of anti-immigrant executive orders and policies, unprecedented changes in caselaw, and the advent of a global pandemic, have created this perfect storm that we are in today. To illustrate this, I will focus on a young woman named Maria. She came to the U.S. at the age of 19 with her two-year-old daughter, Ana, seeking protection from domestic violence and death threats that they received in Honduras. Upon their release from immigration detention, they settled in the Bronx and currently reside in a shelter. On the morning of their immigration hearing, they arrived thirty minutes late because Ana had had a health scare, and Maria needed to take her to the hospital. Maria and Ana did not have a lawyer, because no immigrant – regardless of age, trauma history or language ability – is entitled to an attorney in immigration court. Despite Maria's attempts to explain her lateness, the Immigration Judge issued orders of removal for both Maria and her daughter.

Thanks to ICARE funding from the City, The Door began representing Maria and Ana and, after extensive work, our office was able to reopen both cases and file an application for asylum based on the domestic violence that Maria suffered in Honduras. Additionally, Maria was eligible for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) because she had been abused, neglected and abandoned by her father. We were able to get an emergency hearing in family court and obtain the necessary orders for Maria to apply for SIJS, and USCIS recently approved her application. Unfortunately, the outcome of Maria and Ana's case, like many others in their situation, remains uncertain. Though the government granted Maria SIJS, a visa for a green card in her category will likely not be available for another 2-3 years, and current immigration policies place her at risk of deportation. We will have to pursue her asylum claim with the court, which is no easy task given the eradication of U.S. asylum protections over the past four years.

New case law and policies under the Trump Administration have left many young people stuck in removal proceedings without recourse. While we are hopeful that the new administration will open new pathways for immigrants to obtain legal status, the process of unwinding the prior administration's policies will necessarily be slow and complicated. For example, many policies are entrenched at the highest levels of EOIR, or have been confirmed through caselaw. One major contributor to this problem is the EOIR's Family Unit (FAMU) docket. For children who enter the U.S. with one or both parents and are placed in removal proceedings, immigration judges are forced to complete their case within one year. For asylum seekers, this is an incredibly short timeline to find an attorney, file an application, collect supporting documentation from their home countries, identify experts and prepare witnesses for testimony in court. Furthermore, the Board of Immigration Appeals issued decisions in 2018 and 2020 that limit immigration judges' ability to grant continuances or administratively close cases when more preparation time is needed, or when there are applications pending with USCIS. For SIJS applicants, this can result in their deportation, since courts will not grant continuances and delay removal while these young people's applications are pending with USCIS or while they are waiting in line for a green card.

*Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Our Work*

The Pandemic has enormously affected how immigration applications are processed and how courts operate. For those seeking SIJS, which make up the majority of our young people covered by the ICARE grant, they must fight legal battles in three different realms: family court; USCIS; and immigration court. Firstly, they must obtain requisite court orders in family court in order to qualify for SIJS. During the pandemic, family courts in New York City have only been hearing emergency cases. Secondly, they must file their SIJS applications with USCIS. In 2020, USCIS staff was cut significantly, meaning slower processing times, and an increased number of administrative errors which leave young people waiting on receipts and biometrics appointments for months. Finally, they must terminate their removal proceedings or file for relief with the immigration court.

As EOIR rolls out their new remote practices, we have seen increasingly inconsistent and unfair rulings which accelerate the deportation process for our young people who are SIJS eligible. One of these mechanisms rolled out by the EOIR in the end of 2020 is the "scheduling order." Young people who don't have applications currently pending with the immigration court have received

orders which require them to submit an application for relief with the court or receive a removal order in the alternative. Unaccompanied minors and "vulnerable populations" are supposed to be exempt from these scheduling orders, yet we have continued to receive scheduling orders for our young people who have been designated unaccompanied minors, and the EOIR has yet to define who is included in "vulnerable populations." The deadline for these applications is usually weeks, which never enough time to prepare applications during a pandemic. As SIJS applicants wait 2-3 years for their visa to become current before they can apply for a green card, they have no pending relief with the immigration court, which means deportation in the wake of these new scheduling orders, unless they qualify for asylum. During this time, they remain in a state of limbo without authorization to work in the U.S. and without a meaningful opportunity to progress and succeed in their personal and professional lives until their visa becomes current. This has a grave impact on their emotional development, and for those who are now college-age, they have no access to financial aid and no opportunity to seek gainful employment.

Despite these unprecedented challenges, we have been successful in terminating removal proceedings for over a dozen of our young people, we filed adjustment of status applications in more than 30 cases, and we have received green card approvals in over 20 cases. We have obtained family court orders in a number of cases, and we are doing systematic advocacy in service to our young people who are stuck in the "SIJS backlog" and facing deportation. Our work at The Door has inspired and informed what is now a nationwide coalition of over 55 organizations (not including trade organizations, law schools, cities and states who support the project) in an effort to end this harmful SIJS backlog.

In addition to the legal challenges that this pandemic has brought about, our young people face extraordinary obstacles in their personal lives. Many have survived traumatic experiences in their home country and on their journeys here. While here in the U.S., their lives are not without difficultly, especially during this pandemic where many are experiencing joblessness, homelessness, increased isolation, and increased stress. For those in school, they must overcome language barriers in a remote setting, with limited technologic resources and academic support. The Door is an entry point to these much-needed social services. We work alongside social workers who counsel our young people on a regular basis and advocate for them in academic settings and help them enroll health insurance. We connect them to other benefits that they qualify for with their immigration status, and work to fill in the gaps. This past year, when many of our young people became jobless or lost their financial support and could not access pandemic relief from the government, The Door created an emergency fund to support them. We also hold space for weekly support groups (now remotely) and we connect our members to their peers within this supportive community. In 2020, we collected surveys from our clients to better understand what factors influence their decision to access (or turn down) mental health services. We hope to use this feedback to improve the services we provide as well as find creative ways to better educate young people on the benefits of obtaining mental health services. We continue to operate both in person and remotely, in order to ensure the safety of our young people and staff, and still provide our young people with the support that they need.

*A Growing Need*

The challenges of the pandemic are far from over, and there is still much work to be done in order to roll back the damage from the last four years of the Trump Administration's assault on

immigrants. The courts remain stacked with Trump appointees and ICE trial attorneys who were hired to forward the administration's anti-immigrant policies. New fee rules and regulations remain uncertain with ongoing litigation, and there is a constant need to update and educate ourselves as practitioners. This will not change in the upcoming year. The future for our young people like Maria and her daughter Ana remains insecure, and nothing under the new administration promises them protection from deportation. What is certain is that these young people will not be able to navigate this complex and highly adversarial process alone.

We only expect the need for legal services to grow over the next year. Border agents predict that over 35,000 children will present themselves at the southern border by June 2021, and through the rest of the year. Thousands of these children will ultimately be released to adults in New York, where they will be in desperate need of legal and other social services. With ICARE funding, The Door will be able to provide these young people with holistic services, ensuring not only that they prevail in their immigration cases, but that they are connected to housing, healthcare, counseling and educational services, so that they can achieve long term success and stability in the United States.

Each year, The Door represents nearly 200 young people with our ICARE funding. The ICARE coalition is losing private funding and without such funding and the continued economic support of the City Council, our office will be unable to continue doing such important work. The Door's work as part of the larger ICARE coalition is therefore imperative to prevent the deportation of these remarkable young people and support them when they need it the most. The Door is asking for $703,500 as part of the ICARE coalition's ask for $5,192,300.

Respectfully,

Melissa C. Peterson

Melissa Peterson, Esq.
Supervising Attorney
The Door's Legal Services Center

Ice Theatre of New York

CELEBRATING THE JOY OF DANCING ON ICE

May 25, 2021

Re: New York City Council Budget Hearing – written testimony

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Josef Koudelka
Meredith Monk
Ken Shelley
Atoy Wilson

Dear Chairman Dromm and members of the City Council:

I thank you for your dedication to this process.

It is my privilege to address this body today. My name is Jirina Ribbens and I am the Executive Director of Ice Theatre of New York, Inc. ®, a non-profit dance company on ice. We are proud to have been part of the fabric of NYC's cultural community for over 35 years.

Founded by Moira North in 1984, Ice Theatre of New York (ITNY) is non-profit organization based in New York City. ITNY's mission is to celebrate and advance dance on ice as a performance art. Through its performances in both traditional and site-specific venues, ITNY presents ice dance that helps to open one's eyes to seeing gliding on ice in new and unexpected ways. ITNY was the very first ice dance company to receive dance program funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

Ice Theatre of New York commissions choreographers and performance artists to create new works for the company, nurtures emerging artists and celebrates recognized artists and coaches. ITNY explores what is possible with artistic theatrical dance movement on ice.

ITNY maintains a professional Ice Dance Ensemble and a Junior Ensemble for aspiring young performers; conducts weekly Master Edge Classes at Sky Rink open to all ice artists; presents the free City Skate Concert Series at Rockefeller Center, Bryant Park and other outdoor seasonal rinks; and offers its educational outreach program, "New Works and Young Artists Series", in Brooklyn, Queens and Harlem to NYC public school children.

We continue to collaborate with choreographers from both the dance and skating worlds, while exploring creatively, innovative relationships with artists from theatre, music and new media disciplines.

Annually we introduce up to 2,000 public school children to the fine art of dancing on ice and the physical activity of skating, which they can do in their own neighborhoods. The New Works and Young Artists Series is an over 25-year-old initiative created to bring the art of ice dance to public school children, introduce them to an ice facility in their area and to a healthy physical activity that they might engage in throughout their life.

The New Works and Young Artists Series consists of a short performance of our professional company along with some up and coming “ice artists” (kids love to see other kids of various ages perform as well as the professionals) and following the performance is a free on ice clinic that teaches of basic skills of skating.

Our performances and classes moved online during the shutdown, providing enriching experiences to the children stuck at home citywide and actually reaching classes that we never were able to before! Moving forward we hope to resume in person classes and performances as well as continuing some virtual presentations.

To quote Governor Cuomo: “Since its inception in 1984, Ice Theatre of New York® has been dedicated to the development and advancement of figure skating as a performing art. Through community outreach, it enables New York City public school children to get out on the ice and is widely recognized for the “New Works and Young Artists Series,” its innovative educational program that uses skating as an effective and empowering motivator and teaching tool.”

In a normal year, we employ up to 50 artists and our public performances attract up to 30,000 people.

Ice Theatre of New York weathered the storm by pivoting to virtual programming with the help of some federal funds and our private patrons, but we will need more support to get back to full live programming, the better part of which we present to NYC residents, tourists and public school students free of charge.

Our budget is down a third this year –lower than in the past 2 decades. Just like all City performing arts organizations we need funding restored so we can re-employ the artists and teachers, get back to public performances and start serving the community again.

I urge you to continue funding the arts. Ice Theatre of New York joins our colleagues in supporting the 70 Million Dollar Cultural Plan for Recovery (CPR), which includes:
-- an additional $30M to the DCLA to restore and add to funding for both CIGs and program groups
-- restoring the funding for critical cultural initiatives
-- baselining the funding for the Coalition of Theaters of Color
and an additional $40M from the administration to support the cultural sector across our city, so we can heal our communities, and lead the city's economic recovery.

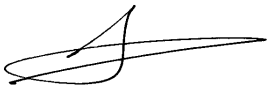
We want to add that we are so grateful for the administration's support of independent artists with the Artists Corps, and ask that the Council continue this program, along with the creation of an Artist Registry, to create ongoing support for our cultural workforce so artists can thrive in our city and it will remain the cultural capital of the world.

Ice Theatre of New York is looking forward to continuing as part of the essential cultural framework of the City, which generates 110 Billion Dollars in economic activity annually.

> *"Skating…combines and surpasses the joys of flying and dancing: only in a certain type of a dream do we ever else attain a higher degree of the same ravishing experience of exultantly skimming the earth."*
>
> —Ernest Jones, Biographer of Freud

I thank you very much for your attention.

Sincerely,



Jirina Ribbens
Executive Director, Ice Theatre of New York, Inc. ®

Attachments:
FY22 Cultural Plan for Recovery
FY22 Request for Independent Artists and Cultural Workers

CC:
Speaker of the NYC Council, Corey Johnson
Council Member Van Bramer
Council Member Mark Levine
Jack Bernatovicz
Brenda McKinney

## Cultural Plan For Recovery (CPR) - TOTAL ASK: $70M

**New York City's cultural community and those it employs and serves continue to grapple with the economic losses COVID brought. There is no recovery without the arts, and the below package ensures the City invests in this community in an equitable way that best reaches those people, programs, and organizations who need support and can lead the sector forward.**

**$15M** - Cultural Equity Fund created as a way of investing in BIPOC led / BIPOC serving cultural organizations in order to establish better equity in arts and cultural funding. Funding will go to organizations of all sizes to support:

- General operating support for BIPOC led organizations
- Advancement of Anti-racism work - with a priority given to BIPOC-led organizations

This fund begins to undo a history of systemic underfunding of cultural organizations in communities of color - and reflects decades of activism by those organizations via such alliances as the Cultural Equity Group. This Cultural Equity Fund also shows NYC's commitment to the CreateNYC plan by advancing social and racial justice throughout our cultural field. This fund answers the Urgency of Now.

**$30M** - Restoration of funding historically added at Adoption split 50/50 between CIGs and CDF funded program groups with a carve-out for CUNY Corps. This demonstrates a restoration of $20.2M from FY21 and an additional $9.8 investment to bring this funding back to prior levels. Also asking the Council for a full restoration of all initiatives, including the baselining of Coalition Theaters of Color.

**$5M** - Added to DCLA's budget to increase its capacity to support this investment in New York City's arts and cultural community.

**$10M** - Funding for non-profit performing arts, to keep them solvent while they remain shuttered and to support their additional cost when they can reopen. The nonprofit performing arts are uniquely harmed by the pandemic; they were the first to close and will be the last to reopen, and were largely shut out of State aid for for-profit performing arts venues. When these institutions are able to reopen, we anticipate that audiences will be greatly diminished—typically 80% full is the break-even point—and we will incur significant new costs to open safely (such as rapid testing of staff and artists and protocols like CLEAR for audiences). Short term relief will help this sector through this period. Funding should be commensurate with organization size to be meaningful.

**$10M** - Fund to invest in cultural groups in neighborhoods and communities hardest hit by COVID. Relief grants available to cultural organizations of every size to help them stabilize and recover from the economic devastation of COVID. This fund will target arts and culture groups and independent artists located in and/or doing work in communities hardest hit by COVID - determined by zip codes that had the highest infection and highest death tolls. It can also mean groups and artists in the disabled community who suffered disproportionately. The goal is to save the most vulnerable organizations, most at risk of closing, whose services are the most needed in these neighborhoods which had the fewest cultural assets before COVID.

REQUEST to support NYC's independent artists and cultural workers

*The people in the arts and cultural sector who create and bring arts and culture to the public are essential to the economic recovery of New York's neighborhoods and in maintaining New York's creative edge in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.*

*This request creates a direct support mechanism for independent art workers that both extends immediate relief and lays the foundation for ongoing annual investment in the development of the city's creative workforce.*

It supports:

1. The development and creation of a city-wide Artists' Registry (first proposed in Council Intro 2195) to build a stronger information exchange to and from our sector's creative workforce, open to all residents regardless of immigration status. The Registry will build on other borough specific and discipline specific mailing lists and registries as well as the NYC Artists Corps. It will provide access to opportunities by linking, for example, to the NYC ID program and will further create a data mechanism for reporting on the sector's workforce, validating much-needed information for an often hard to reach segment of the city's general workforce.

2. The continuation of the NYC Artists Corps. This builds on and deepens the Mayor's commitment of $25M towards the launch of this initiative, which runs July through December. The program's growth throughout the year will strengthen new relationships in all boroughs with community organizations, arts organizations, and city agencies. This fund will capitalize on the program's work, and incorporate lessons learned from historic labor programs such as the CETA community engagement program, to build an invaluable creative workforce development program for NYC.

The ecosystem of the arts, cultural, and entertainment sector is driven by the fuel of creativity and talents of its largely invisible engine - *individual artists and cultural workers.* While the sector as a whole struggles to recover from the economic impact of the pandemic, the very people who are the mainstays of NYC's creative industries are running on empty, disproportionately impacting creative workers in historically under resourced communities.

In February NYS Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli highlighted that this sector saw the largest decline among all sectors in the city's economy due to COVID-19. Employment declined by *66%* over a one-year period ending in December 2020.

Lives throughout our sector have been upended by the realities of job losses and income losses in both the non-profit and profit creative worlds. This has only

exacerbated the income fragility that has long existed for individual art workers and has further impacted the neighborhoods in which they live and work. This funding for art workers acknowledges a major gap in our arts and cultural ecosystem, and seeks to address perennial workforce issues so essential to attracting and maintaining a creative workforce in NY.

NYC's CreateNYC cultural plan points out the need to better support the city's individual artists and shows how New Yorkers benefit from their engagement with artists. These initiatives take a transformational step towards changing the support system for our sector's workforce so artists and cultural workers can remain and thrive in New York; it positions NYC in a major leadership role in its commitment to the people – not just the objects and buildings – who are essential to the vitality and health of our arts and cultural ecosystem and to providing increased access for all New Yorkers to the impact of the arts in their lives. This major investment will allow New York to rebuild and recover with the renewed imagination and creativity and spirit this moment demands.

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**New York City Council Oversight Hearing**
**on Executive Budget**
May 25, 2021

We would like to thank the New York City Council's Committee on Finance and Subcommittee on the Capital Budget for holding this important oversight hearing on the City's Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget. INCLUDEnyc (formerly Resources for Children with Special Needs) has worked with hundreds of thousands of families since our founding nearly 40 years ago, helping them navigate city and state service and support systems.

We testify today to highlight the urgent need for the Council and the City to prioritize the needs of young people with disabilities in the FY22 budget. With the unprecedented amount of additional money coming in from New York State and the federal government this year, hundreds of thousands of disabled New Yorkers under the age of 26 finally have a real chance at receiving a quality education, meaningful inclusion, and becoming employed. Their families also have a chance at accessing the required information they need to adequately support their child at home, school, and within their communities. But only if the City and Council dedicate funds accordingly.

We urge the council to maintain $3.246 million funding for the Autism Awareness Initiative. Children on the autism spectrum and their families have been amongst the most affected by the constant and radical disruptions these last fifteen months. During this time we served more than 15,000 people with any suspected or known disabilities, including 1500+ who identified either as a young person with autism, or a family member/caregiver of someone with autism. We are deeply grateful to this Council for this initiative. Because it provided us the resources we needed to help these families during COVID-19 .

Yet we also know these young people and their families will need the same amount of help now and moving forward, if not more, as they begin to formally address the changes in their child's behavior, communication skills, and learning as the result of the loss of in-person care. services, support, and communities. Many of these families are on the brink right now. Without this resource, we are deeply concerned these families will not be able to access the support they need and have a further negative impact on their overall well being, including physical safety for some.

-more-

We also urge the council to press on the City to release a timely plan on how the Department of Education will provide compensatory services for the 300,000+ students with disabilities ages 3-21. The FY 22 Executive Budget includes $236 million for special education services, including compensatory services. However, the absence of an implementation plan and timeline from the Department of Education on how they will provide these services, makes it difficult to determine if this funding level appropriately will meet the need.

The City must soon put out guidance in writing for the 1400+ principals in our system on how they will determine who receives services. So our students receive the specialized instruction, support, and services they are legally entitled to receive in order to make educational progress. And without individual families having to pursue their due process rights and file for administrative hearings.

We also are very concerned about the social-emotional well being of all our students and their families. While we are thrilled the City will address the mental health of all students at all schools, the City must use multiple assessment tools. One screening tool chosen and used for one million students will not be effective in identifying the common signs of trauma and distress for many students with intellectual disabilities and autism (approximately 30,000 last school year). We ask this council to press the City to purchase screening tools that specifically are designed for young people with developmental disabilities that manifest in social interaction and communication disorders.

Thank you for taking the time today to consider this important matter. We look forward to partnering with you to improve equity and access for all young people with disabilities in New York City.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Glassman

Barbara A. Glassman
Executive Director

INDIA HOME
A CENTER FOR SENIOR CARE

Commitment to Improve
the Quality of Life

Tuesday May 26, 2021

To: New York City Council Committee on Finance
From: India Home, Inc.
Re: Oversight – Executive Budget Hearing – Finance

Thank you Council Finance and Chair Daniel Dromm for giving India Home the opportunity to testify.

India Home serves the South Asian older adult community with culturally competent services, and serves the Queens and broader NYC community with community outreach. At India Home's centers, our seniors find community and resources through a diverse range of programs and activities. Our programs include congregate meals, creative aging programs, case management programs (e.g. assistance with citizenship, benefits access, service referrals, etc.), and educational talks on health, nutrition, financial safeguards and elder law.

Our community has been through a lot over this past year. Of >85,000 patients in the NYC Health + Hospitals system, South Asians were among the groups hit hardest by COVID-19, with the second-highest rate of test positivity (31%), and the second-highest rate of hospitalizations. Furthermore, the intersection of being a South Asian and being an older adult has presented unique challenges for our community. In NYC, 23% of APA seniors live in poverty. More than 2 in 3 APA seniors are limited English Proficient. During the pandemic, many seniors have not been able to meet basic needs such as a nutritious meal, healthcare services and having someone to support them.

India Home stepped up during this time to continue to provide culturally competent services for seniors and provide our community with resources. We have pivoted our senior center services to home-delivered meals and groceries, virtual programming, case management, and wellness check-up calls. We have provided information in language to our seniors to provide guidance, recommend safety protocol including methods of getting tested, and address vaccine hesitancy. We also have been taking part in robust initiatives to stabilize our community across the City, with PPE distributions, information on COVID-19 & safety precautions, as well as referrals to testing and vaccination sites. Many in the community continue to face shortages of PPE, they risk themselves and their families while making sure that they have food to feed their family. We have seen many of these families have to depend on family members struggling to find essential needs. To date we have engaged over 25,000 community members through COVID outreach and have distributed over 200,000 masks. The information we have shared with our community has been in-language, in Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Nepali, Spanish, and Mandarin among other languages. The work of organizations like ours has made a difference over this past year to help stop the spread across our diverse New York City.

Despite Asian-led organizations going above and beyond over the past year, and the fact that the Asian Pacific Americans comprise over 15% and are the fastest growing population in New York City, Asian-led and serving organizations remain historically underfunded and received only 4.65% of City Council

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**Dr. Ankineedu Prasad**

discretionary dollars and less than 1.5% of social service contract dollars in FY 2021. Our community based organizations never received funding that adequately supported their vital services in neighborhoods, and during a time when APA immigrants are especially vulnerable, they have had to fill tremendous gaps in services.

We are calling on NY City Council to create **Recovery and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers**, a new $4 million citywide initiative to support social services by Asian American-led and -serving community-based organizations to address the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes and disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our communities, while laying the groundwork for long-term healing for APA New Yorkers. The Recovery and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers initiative is the safeguard that our community needs. We also have numerous other initiatives that will make a difference through increased support, for both APA communities and for our elder community.

**Our recommendations are as follows:**

1. Please support the Recovery and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers initiative
2. We ask that NYC Council support discretionary asks of APA community-based organizations in order to sustain the critical services they provide in addressing the growing needs of New Yorkers amid the pandemic.
3. We ask that NYC Council 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:
    1. Digital Inclusion and Literacy Initiative
    2. Emergency Food/Food Pantries
    3. Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations
    4. Support Our Seniors
4. We ask that City Council discretionary funds also be restored to FY20 levels and bolstered as appropriate, including by restoring $2,040,000 that was previously made available through the “Healthy Aging” initiative.
5. We ask that $4.4 Million of funding is invested in addressing the digital divide, which would allow for improved technology and service access for older adults by investing in the technology infrastructure at Senior Centers, as well as directly supporting individual access to technology.

**Thank you for your time and consideration of our requests.**

Sincerely,

Vasundhara D. Kalasapudi, M.D.
Executive Director, India Home

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# New York City Council
# Committee on Finance
# Executive Budget Hearing FY 2022
# May 25, 2021

## Testimony of Chiya Ikemi
## Director, Japanese American Social Services, Inc. (JASSI)

My name is *Chiya Ikemi*, director of Japanese American Social Service, Inc.

Thank you. Chair Dromm and the esteemed members of the Committee on Finance forgiving us the opportunity to submit a written testimony.

Japanese American Social Services, Inc. strongly supports the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families' (CACF) 15% and Growing Campaign in their proposal to create Recovery and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers, a new $4 million NYC Council Citywide Initiative to support social services by Asian American-led and -serving community-based organizations.

JASSI is an Asian-led 501 (c)(3) charitable social service organization that provides a safety net for the Japanese American Community in New York since 1981. JASSI has been providing free quality social services to people who face problems resulting from language barriers, cultural differences and service system inequities over 39 years at local community level.

Unlike other Asian immigrant groups, Japanese are widely spread throughout New York City which makes it difficult to build a local community in their neighborhoods. 92% of our senior members require assistance in Japanese and 80% of them have low to moderate income

Anxiety level for Japanese has been very high since late 2019. There was an increase in anti-Asian attacks, then the lockdown in March of last year. These stressful incidents increased the demand for assurance calls to our senior clients by 368% in 2020 compared to the pre-COVID 19 period. We anticipate this trend will continue after seeing the recent attacks on Asian communities nationwide.

JASSI staff was heavily burdened with senior cases from July 1- December 31, 2020. In fact, during this period 56% of their time was devoted to taking care of senior clients on COVID 19 matters. JASSI made 2,329 contacts to assist 495 senior clients in FY2020. The cases range from homelessness, food security, mental health, public benefits, Medicare and emotional support. The current situation requires additional funding to meet the rising challenges.

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At the height of Anti-Asian Hate Crimes, now more than ever. I hope NYC Council recognizes how important Asian-led CBOs are in the face of a crisis like the current one. It is more necessary than ever to provide adequate funding to support Asian American New Yorkers in the healing, recovery, and revitalization of our communities to help move NYC towards racial equity.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. We look forward to working with the City Council to ensure that Asian American New Yorkers have access to the services and supports they need to recover and heal from the tragic Anti-Asian Hate Crimes, and to not just survive but to thrive in this challenging time.



Chiya Ikemi
Director
Japanese American Social Services, inc.

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Organization: Japanese American Social Services, Inc. (JASSI)

New York City Council Committee of Finance
*Budget and ACCESS HEALTH NYC.*

May 25, 2021

Japanese American Social Services, Inc. (a.k.a. JASSI)

Thank you, Chair CM Dromm and members of the Committee of Finance for giving us the opportunity to submit a written testimony.

JASSI is a part of 15% and Growing asks for the council to support the campaign ask for $4 million for the "Recovery and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers" proposal.

Covid-19 has devastatingly impacted APA New Yorkers. Anti-Asian attacks, and the lockdown and unemployment which exacerbated the systemic inequities that were already facing our communities prior to the pandemic. These rising challenges vary across communities and rely heavily on our APA-led and serving organizations to fill in the gaps of services through culturally inclusive and language accessible services that have the most impact to address the needs of our community. Now more than ever, providing equitable funding to APA New Yorkers is necessary in the recourse and revitalization of our communities as New York City re-opens.

During the lockdown many Japanese restaurants closed. And according to Asian Federation's report "Impact of Covid-19 on Asian Employment in NYC", their workers were impacted severely resulting a massive loss in employment of 72%. JASSI staff have assisted a total of 6,720 clients during FY2020, who required help in unemployment benefits, low-cost healthcare insurance, mental health support and entitlements to mention a few due to COVID19. About 75% of the clients are ages between 19-59. JASSI sees that Access Health is critical this year, especially as New York City re-opens and all our programs must be ready to support the increasing health needs and concerns. Health & Well-Being funding is highly critical in this public health crisis. Healthcare access problems in APA community must be addressed now. We ask to enhance the access health initiative funding to $3.25 million that equips organizations to conduct education and outreach among hard-to-reach population many of whom remain uninsured in NYC.

Our community-based organizations never received funding that adequately supported their vital services in neighborhoods, and during a time when Asian American New Yorkers are especially vulnerable with persisting anti-Asian hate crimes, they have had to fill tremendous gaps in services. NYC Council must expand funding

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for the citywide initiatives to ensure that more Asian American-led and serving groups are adequately funded to support vulnerable people.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony.

Hiroko Hatanaka
Member of the Board of Japanese American Social Services, Inc.

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**TESTIMONY**
New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget Hearing
Tuesday, May 25th, 2021, at 10:00 AM EST
Submitted by:
Bridget McBrien, Government Relations Director

Thank you Chairperson Dromm and members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

The Jewish Board of Family & Children's Services is among the city's premier human services organizations, serving thousands of New Yorkers of all ages and backgrounds at sites throughout the five boroughs and in Westchester. Broadly speaking, our programs serve low-income individuals and families from three populations: those with mental health challenges, those who have experienced abuse or neglect, and those with intellectual/developmental disabilities.

Our mission is to strengthen families and communities throughout New York City by helping individuals of all backgrounds realize their potential and live as independently as possible. Family-driven, strengths-based care, culturally affirming services, collaborative community partnerships, and an awareness of the role of trauma are key elements in every service we provide.

The anticipated influx of COVID-associated anxiety and depression, substance use, loneliness, and domestic violence, combined with an increased risk for contracting and transmitting COVID-19 among patients with underlying behavioral health conditions, are putting tremendous stress on our city's behavioral health infrastructure. As the gravity of the situation became apparent, The Jewish Board moved quickly to ensure that all our programs did not experience significant disruption. We hired temporary staff, purchased personal protective equipment for staff and clients, implemented new cleaning protocols, and instituted a temporary bonus program for residential direct care staff, in recognition of their commitment in coming to work when most New Yorkers were staying home. **For our community-based programs, we quickly pivoted to telehealth and are now providing approximately 25,000 telehealth visits per month**. We continue to see an increased need for our mental health and social services. **Just in the first five months of 2021, we have already received 31,181 calls to our hotline for therapy appointments, three times as many as compared to the same time period in 2020.**

We cannot run without our committed workforce and well-funded City contracts. Our government contracts drastically underfund the cost of implementing their mandated services, stretching us so thin that it is next to impossible to ensure our workforce receives the pay increases and emergency pay they deserve.

The human services sector stepped up to meet the need of New Yorkers in crisis despite the fact we faced a funding crisis long before our City saw its first case of COVID-19. After the City Council demanded ICR funding FY22 Preliminary Budget response, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced the addition of $57 million to restore the ICR cut in FY21 and baselining the full $91 million to sustain the program for

future years as part of his FY22 Executive Budget! Thank you for championing this issue!

However, the need for the FY22 budget to invest in the essential human services workforce remains. It is critical for the Adopted FY22 budget to include restoration of ICR funding as well as the follow core investments in the human services workers and programs:

1. The restoration of the COLA on the personnel services line of all human services contracts at a rate of 3% at a cost of $48 million for FY22.
2. A plan for the administration to promote wage equity in the public sector by correcting the pay disparities the human services workforce experience, as outlined in the City Council's FY22 Preliminary Budget Response.
3. Include $20M of baseline funding to support the Fair Futures initiative, a vital investment in the future of our youth in foster care. With past Council support, Jewish Board's youth coaches have made a tremendous difference in the lives our youth and set them on the road to completing their education and finding housing as they age out of care.
4. Include $85M to address the preschool special education class shortage and provide salary parity to teachers of preschool special education classes at CBOs, as recommended in the City Council's response to the preliminary budget. Preschoolers with significant disabilities should not have to wait another year for the City to make needed investments to meet their needs.
5. Restore the 15% cut to initiatives, including those concerning mental health services.

Investments in the human services workforce are critical. New York City has suffered a net-loss of over 44,000 human services jobs since last year due to underfunded contracts and compounding cuts at the City and State level. On top of this massive net loss of jobs, City-contracted human services workers, on average, make less than half compared to those outside of the sector with similar credentials and experience. Our workers are invaluable to the health and well-being of the City and they deserve to be compensated fairly.

Underfunding human services contracts come at a direct cost for communities most impacted by COVID-19 due to income inequality, structural racism, and ableism. The stark reality is that long before this crisis hit, the City government has asked us to do more with less and refusing the fund the direct cost of implementing contracted programs.

It is impossible to ignore that our services and workers are invaluable to the health and wellbeing of the City, both in the pandemic and during the City's recovery. The FY22 budget must reflect this. Thank you so much for your support and the opportunity to testify. Together we must ensure the restoration of ICR funding, COLA for the human services workforce, and a comprehensive plan to promote wage equity in the sector are all included in the FY22 Adopted Budget.

Testimony re: Preschool Special Education

Testimony of Steve Held for the New York City Council

Committee on Finance

Re: Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget

May 25, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to file testimony with you about the proposed budget. My name is Steve Held, and I am the Executive Director of Just Kids Early Childhood Learning Center. Just Kids has been serving children from Birth thru Five with and without disabilities for 40 years now. We opened our school in Far Rockaway five years ago and value the chance to serve families in our community.

I would like to thank the City Council for recommending $85 million in your response to the budget to address the shortage of preschool special education classes and to pay our teachers the same as NYC Pre-K teachers. Each year our special education staff are challenged with educating children who need intensive intervention in order to start to support their successful journey in education and, of course, life. Families look to us to help them realize their dreams for their children. Our special education staff must continue to learn about atypical development and family support in order to be effective with their children. Our program provides on-going training and support, and we can only hope to retain staff for a few years before their credentials and experience afford our staff a chance to move on to higher paid positions in the BOE.

Thank you for considering salary parody for special education staff.

We applaud your wisdom!

Steve Held

KCS
WWW.KCSNY.ORG
THE KOREAN COMMUNITY SERVICES OF METROPOLITAN NEW YORK, INC.
뉴 욕 한 인 봉 사 센 터

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*Since 1973*

**Testimony Before the New York City Council**
**Committee on Finance**
**NYC Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on the FY 2022 Preliminary Budget**
**May 25, 2021**

**Testimony of Jessica Lee, Healthcare Navigator**
**The Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS)**

**Our community**

Founded in 1973, the Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS) was the first and remains the largest community/social service agency dedicated to the Korean community.We offer more than 20 programs that serve more than 1,300 individuals on a daily basis in the areas of Aging, Community, Workforce Development, clinical Mental Health services, and Public Health. Our mission is to be a bridge to Korean and the greater Asian immigrants to overcome cultural, language, and economic barriers to be effective and thriving members of the community. The division of Public Health, or the Public Health and Research Center (PHRC) is part of a city-wide initiative called the Access Health NYC that funds community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide community health education, outreach, and assistance to all New Yorkers about how to access health care and coverage. Being part of this unique initiative for three years now, PHRC has been able to deliver a more holistic approach to our access health service such as interpretation services, case management, and education-based counseling.

**How has our community benefited from the Access Health NYC initiative?**

- Health care being such a complex system, navigating and accessing health care services is a struggle to folks who are limited English proficient in the Korean community. Therefore, with the funds from Access Health, KCS has been able to improve health literacy among community members through linguistically appropriate education and outreach opportunities.
- Discretionary Funding for the Access Health NYC initiative has also expanded our healthcare navigator services by providing in-depth case management and interpretation services. Proper health insurance utilization does not stop at enrollment assistance. KCS offers post-enrollment services such as, but not limited to, understanding health insurance terminology, locating an in-network primary care provider, and making the first premium payment. In addition, for more complicated issues such as health insurance claims billing/payment reconciliation, premium reimbursement, etc, KCS is able to provide interpretation and translation services for community members.

- So far, KCS has reached more than 3,000 Korean immigrants through media, educated more than 1,000 community members on healthcare policies and literacy, and managed more than 143 complex healthcare cases for FY20.

**Why do we need Access Health NYC?**

In early of 2020, Ms. Audrey reached out to us asking for assistance regarding her health insurance. Because of her disability, she required two public health insurance programs, Medicare and Medicaid, to cover her expensive medical costs. However, because she did not know how to update her address, all letters regarding her health insurance were lost. In addition, she was unaware of her primary coverage being a third-party insurer, so she was unable to get coverage through Medicare. With the help of our healthcare navigator, we were able to update her address on file so that she could continue to get important documents regarding her health benefits, contact the third-party insurer to terminate her coverage, and lastly, contact the Benefits Coordination and Recovery Center to update the primary coverage as Medicare, again. Fortunately, Ms. Audrey had no gap in coverage and was able to continue seeing her doctors without having to worry about her medical bills.

Ms. Audrey's case is not an uncommon issue within our community, especially during a time of crisis like the COVID19 pandemic. Therefore, we ask you to stop the Article 6 cuts towards the Access Health NYC initiative so that we can continue to offer these services. The funding will help our community receive better access to health care services and increase utilization of health insurance benefits through culturally and linguistically available information.

We sincerely thank the members of the City Council and Committee on Health for supporting the efforts of community-based organizations like KCS in the past. Without your support, our work for the community and assistance for at-risk individuals would not be possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our stories.

Jessica Lee
Program Manager /Healthcare Navigator
Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS)

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뉴욕한인봉사센터
*Since 1973*

**Testimony Before the New York City Council**
**Committee on Finance**
**NYC Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on the FY 2022 Executive Budget**
**May 26, 2021**

**Testimony of Juyong Roh, Project Coordinator**
**The Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS)**

Founded in 1973, Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York (KCS) is a non-profit community service organization that provides a wide range of community service programs to meet the diverse needs of the community. KCS provides a variety of professional community services in the areas of aging, education, immigration, workforce development, public health, and mental health. Currently, KCS serves an average of 1,300 individuals daily.

KCS is the only Korean American community-based organization in New York City that offers the program called Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program (MCCAP). The MCCAP helps New York City residents struggling with medical debt and address health insurance problems and financial barriers that will keep them out of medical care. The program provides culturally competent and linguistic services to consumers who are likely to face barriers in accessing information about healthcare coverage and options. The services provided by MCCAP explain consumers' health insurance rights and responsibilities which allow consumers to choose, switch or unregister health plans. In addition, MCCAP assists residents in consumer appeals to New York State regarding health eligibility decisions, and also to understand and access prescription drug coverage.

Especially during the public health emergency, many individuals in our community received services through the Access Health MCCAP program. There were many individuals who were isolated from assistance regarding their health care especially those who are limited English proficient because of the language barrier. For example, Korean immigrants who immigrated when they were old have difficulty in getting access to health care services in the United States. However, with the funds from Access Health MCCAP, KCS has been providing case management such as enrollment, renewal, and problem resolution for Medicare, Medicaid, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to vulnerable groups such as the elderly, low-income, and limited English proficient. Not only that, we assist community members with medical billing disputes from government agencies, hospitals, or insurance companies through counseling and navigation.

In addition, KCS has been offering education and outreach events about health literacy and public assistance programs to community members. We have been holding workshops and online classes to educate community members on healthcare terminologies, policies, and various health programs. Through these efforts, we strive to improve knowledge of health insurance and medical services in our community.

With the funds from Access Health MCCAP, we helped Mr. Lee access services that are eligible to him in the language that he understands. Mr. Lee reached out to KCS with questions regarding Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Due to COVID-19, his working hours had been drastically reduced. He was able to receive Unemployment Insurance benefits, but he still had difficulty in paying rent and other living expenses like food and clothing. However, he did not know if he was eligible for SNAP benefits nor did he know how to apply. Fortunately, one of our advocates was able to pre-screen Mr. Lee for SNAP benefits via phone consultation and guide him through the online application. With the support of the MCCAP coordinator, Mr. Lee was able to apply for and approved for monthly food stamp benefits. Mr. Lee was thankful to not have the financial burden of purchasing food for his family.

We are truly thankful to the members of the City Council and Committee on Health, and we look forward to your continued support in reducing the diverse health disparities in the New York City immigrant community as in previous years. Community-based organizations (CBO) like KCS have a long-standing relationship with the community, trust of community members, and have a sharp knowledge about the needs of the community. Without the support, CBOs like us won't be able to provide much-needed services to the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony.

**New York City Council**
**Committee on Finance Hearing**
**Tuesday, May 25th at 10AM**

**Testifier: Carolyn Cleveland, Kennedy Children's Center**

Thank you for the opportunity to be here. My name is Carolyn Cleveland and I am COO of the Kennedy Children's Center, a 4410 special education preschool program that serves nearly 400 children in East Harlem and the Bronx. I am here to address the critical shortage of teaching staff in programs like ours, and the need for salary parity for 4410 teachers.

Teachers at 4410 programs have the same education and certification requirements as teachers in DOE programs, and yet they are paid almost 30% less. Our student population is overwhelmingly black and latino, bilingual, from low-income households, all with special needs. Because these unequal pay rates make it almost impossible to attract experienced teachers, this means that many of New York City's most challenged and vulnerable students are being taught by teachers who are young, inexperienced, and uncertified.

We are working to address the teacher shortage with our Grow Your Own program, which trains low-income adults to become certified teacher assistants and teachers. While Grow Your Own is a powerful tool for bringing more diverse candidates into the teaching field, without salary parity, 4410 programs like ours will never be able to retain the teachers our students need to succeed.

The current executive budget includes an investment of $22M in FY 22, and $88M in FY 23. But the FY 22 budget does not include any money to address the critical shortage of preschool special education seats, and it increases pay for some teachers while ignoring 4410 teachers. This is not fair to these dedicated teachers or to their students, who will fall even further behind if this inequity is not addressed.

It is vital that the final FY 22 budget include $85M to fulfill the demand for preschool special education services, and provide salary parity to our teachers, as recommended in the City Council's response to the preliminary budget. Thank you.

Early Childhood 4410 Special Education Programs

Good Afternoon and thank-you for the opportunity to address the City Council on the early childhood special education crisis. My name is Jeanne Alter, I am the executive Director of Kennedy Children's Center located in East Harlem and the South Bronx. I have been working in NYC 4410 programs for over 30 years.

Who will teach our children? I ask this question every day. We all agree that every child has the right to qualified and certified teachers. There is not a shortage of teachers who care about young children with special needs – rather, there is a lack of funding and support for teachers who want to work with these young and vulnerable learners. The current executive budget includes a new investment of $22M in FY 22 going up to $88M in FY 23. While I am pleased to see this investment, the FY 2022 budget does not include any money to address the preschool special education class shortage or address the teacher crisis that has plagued the early childhood special education field for over 30 years. FY 2022 should include $85M to address these two issues if educational equity is to be realized.

For the past five years, KCC has been operating our own, privately funded GYO program that is already helping to put quality teachers in front of the children who need them most. We have a solution to recruit and train new teachers, but without fair compensation and salary equity with the NYCDOE, we cannot retain them to work in our schools.

Teaching young children with special needs is not for everyone. We have dedicated and capable teachers who are specifically trained to work with children with significant language delays and behavioral challenges. Why should these teachers make any less than teachers who teach typically developing children in the NYCDOE? Why are NYC preschool children sitting at home when we know how vulnerable they are and how early education is one of the absolute agreed upon solutions to their success and future? Insufficient funding and a lack of certified teachers has led to this crisis. We cannot increase the pay for teachers in one sector of education while ignoring 4410 providers who have been asking for salary parity for over 30 years.

I have spent my career fighting for the needs of children and families in NYC and will continue to be a voice for the urgency and importance of the 4410 community.

Testimony regarding proposed budget

My name is Julie Morris and I am the Director of Speech and Language Services at Kennedy Children's Center. I have worked at this school since 2016 and worked at a similar preschool setting prior to starting at Kennedy. In my time working in this setting, I have seen incredible teachers, administrators, and related service provides work tirelessly to provide the support needed for our Preschool Special Education Students. They spend hours of time participating in trainings, working on materials, advocating for students, and educating parents on different ways to support these children. Research shows us that early support for our students with disability is the best respond to treat their delays and set them up for success in their futures.

We need to invest in our Special Education Programs to support these students who have the highest needs and need the most support. We need to include Special Education Programs in the FY22 budget and moving forward to ensure these children aren't left behind or starting school with even further deficits that could have been addressed when they were identified. We are depriving these students of the opportunity to grow and reach their fullest potential. Including community special education programs in the proposed budget will ensure that educators working with this vulnerable population are paid their fair share of what is deserved for their continued dedication to these students.

In closing, I emphatically support the inclusion of community special education programs in the FY 22 and FY 23 budget because we are working to serve those students who need help most and have continued to go without services due to pandemic or the inability to get a seat in program to support them. We need to invest in their futures.

I am submitting my testimony asking you to recognize the value and influence that 4410 schools have in educating our most vulnerable citizens; preschool children with special needs. Our students and families come to us at a time when families are seeking support, answers and guidance as their young children begin their education in New York City and across the state of New York. As we develop relationships with our families we maintain a high standard of practice and provide much needed services to our students and their families; many of these schools service underserve communities. Of equal importance is our commitment in developing a teacher pipeline to encourage staff to pursue a career as an Early Childhood Special Education Teacher. Many of our staff come from the same communities as our students and the value of young students having teachers that represent their communities in essential and empowering. Pay parity for 4410 teachers that work 12 months as opposed to the DOE's 10 months is critical and just if we as a society are serious about valuing all teachers; regardless where they work. All 4410 teachers are NYS certified and are deserving of equal pay as they educate New York City's Students all of whom have mandated Individual Education Plans. I am confident you will come to see supporting 4410 schools and their staff is of value to the children of New York. In closing, I write this as an educator, an administrator and most importantly as an Aunt of a niece and a nephew with significant learning needs who thrive in 4410 schools. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,

Mary McKillop M. A. CCC-SLP
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**TESTIMONY BEFORE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL'S FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**Presented on May 25, 2021**

My name is Hasan Shafiqullah, and I am the Attorney-in-Charge of the Immigration Law Unit (ILU) at The Legal Aid Society (LAS). For 145 years, LAS has been a tireless advocate for those least able to advocate for themselves. ILU, founded in the 1980s, provides legal representation to vulnerable New Yorkers seeking relief for themselves and their families. We assist those in detention and fighting unlawful deportations, and represent low-income individuals in gaining and maintaining lawful status. Combining this representation with affirmative litigation work, we strive to ensure that families are able to stay together and stabilize their living situations.

Over the most recent year, ILU assisted in nearly 4,500 individual legal matters benefiting over 10,500 New Yorkers citywide.

## A. New York City Council Funding Requests – Immigration

We are grateful for the Council's support for legal services for low-income immigrant New Yorkers, who are among the City's most vulnerable populations. The Council's commitment to ensuring parity of justice and access to comprehensive legal services for our immigrant communities is central to our work and establishes New York City's approach as among the most progressive in the nation. Thanks to support from the New York City Council and the Human Resources Administration, LAS currently conducts the following immigration-related programs:

**The New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP)** has represented detained immigrants facing deportation since 2014, helping to ensure New York families are not separated simply because they cannot afford an attorney. The nation's first universal legal

representation program for detained immigrants, NYIFUP provides high quality, holistic representation to New Yorkers detained and facing deportation who cannot afford an attorney. NYIFUP attorneys carry a full caseload of deportation defense cases, and provide services including master calendar, bond and individual merits hearings, appeals, and social work services. Many of our NYIFUP clients are long-term permanent residents or other non-citizens with strong family ties and long work histories in the U.S.

Since March 16, 2020, the three NYIFUP providers together have secured the COVID-19 related release of over 240 clients incarcerated by ICE, through a combination of individual and group habeas petitions, bond redetermination hearings, and successful requests for humanitarian parole by ICE. **The Legal Aid Society is respectfully requesting a continuation of $16,600,000 for NYIFUP in Fiscal Year 2022, split evenly by the three NYIFUP providers in the amount of $5,533,334 each**.

**The Unaccompanied Minor Children and Families (UMFI) Initiative** has been providing free legal assistance to Unaccompanied Children and Adults with Children fleeing endemic gang violence and domestic abuse since 2014, with the support of the New York City Council. With the NYC Bar Association's resolution supporting universal access to legal services for children in removal proceedings, LAS, along with our partners in the citywide Immigrant Children Advocates' Relief Effort (ICARE), are evaluating this initiative closely to determine how best to scale the program and realize the Bar Association's vision of universal representation. This traumatized and vulnerable population is especially in need of highly-

competent legal representation to advance their claims for asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, and other forms of immigration relief.

From 7/1/19 – 6/30/20, LAS worked on 244 ongoing representation matters that had not concluded by the end of Fiscal Year 2019. During this period, we achieved successful outcomes for 89 removal defense cases, with six individuals granted asylum, 10 individuals granted Special Findings Orders; 46 children granted Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), 1 individual who was granted Motion to Terminate, and 26 individuals who were granted adjustment of status. We have successfully terminated proceedings for 168 minors before the Immigration Court since the start of ICARE, and anticipate additional successful outcomes in FY22. **The Legal Aid Society is respectfully requesting an enhancement to $1,075,000 for UMFI in Fiscal Year 2022, out of $5,157,300 being sought by ICARE as a whole.**

## B. Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on noncitizen communities in New York City cannot be overstated. The neighborhoods most impacted by the pandemic in our city since March 2020 - in terms of transmission, number of cases, and fatalities - have been in areas that are home to large noncitizen communities. As identified by the City Comptroller, there is a sizeable correlation between neighborhoods with high concentrations of immigrants and residential overcrowding – a key driver of COVID-19 transmission.[1] At the same time, noncitizen communities in New York disproportionately

[1] New York City Comptroller, Scott M. Stringer. Protecting NYC's Most Vulnerable Populations During COVID-19 See: https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/protecting-nycs-most-vulnerable-populations-during-covid-19/#_ftn6

experience barriers to accessing health services and are often less likely to have health insurance, which create further difficulties in individuals being able to receive the care they need to successfully recover from and prevent further spread of the virus.[2] This dynamic is compounded by higher levels of institutional distrust among many members of immigrant communities, a distrust that was significantly exacerbated by the former Trump administration's overtly anti-immigrant agenda over the last four years, including its damaging public charge regulations.

Simultaneously, noncitizen New Yorkers have been disproportionately affected by the economic impacts of the virus stemming from the mass closures of "non-essential" businesses and associated economic slow-down. According to one report from The New School, during the early stages of the pandemic 54% of lost private jobs in New York City were held by foreign-born workers.[3] Undocumented New Yorkers have been particularly hard hit: nearly one in six New York City jobs lost due to the pandemic had been held by an undocumented worker. Moreover, the job displacement rate among undocumented workers has been twice that of the overall private sector displacement rate: 54% versus 27% respectively.

This disproportionate impact of the pandemic on New York's noncitizen shines additional light on the vital need for legal services for this population, and we have been on the frontlines of efforts to defend immigrant New Yorkers during the current crisis. The NYIFUP providers have led

[2] Documented NY. *New York Immigrant Communities Hit Hardest by the COVID-19 Pandemic, Data Shows.* See*:* https://documentedny.com/2020/04/02/new-york-immigrant-communities-hit-hardest-by-the-covid-19-pandemic-data-shows/

[3] The New School - Center for New York City Affairs. *The New Strain of Inequality: The Economic Impact of Covid-19 in New York City.* See: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53ee4f0be4b015b9c3690d84/t/5e974be17687ca34b7517c08/1586973668757/NNewStrainofInequality_April152020.pdf

groundbreaking efforts to litigate and advocate for New Yorkers held in dangerous and life-threatening conditions following the widespread transmission of COVID-19 at jails in the New York area where Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detains individuals, in light of ICE's inability to contain the virus effectively. As a result of our interventions, the three NYIFUP providers together have secured the release of hundreds of detained New Yorkers whose medical history and current circumstances made them particularly vulnerable during the pandemic. Our work during this time has exemplified the strength of our universal representation model in ensuring we are able to respond quickly and nimbly to our clients' emerging needs and secure significant protections for New York's immigrant communities at scale. Our federal suits in *Basank v. Decker*[4] and *Coronel v. Decker*[5] were the first two COVID-related federal court victories in the nation secured against ICE on behalf of detained noncitizens, and we have continued to pursue innovative approaches to ensure that we secure the best possible outcomes on behalf of noncitizen New Yorkers. For our detained clients, it is not hyperbole to state that being able to access our services during the COVID-19 pandemic has sometimes been a matter of life or death.

### C. The need for continued funding for immigration legal services under the Biden Administration

Our representation during the pandemic on behalf of New Yorkers in detention provides just one illustration of the vital importance of our services at this point in time for what are among New

[4] 1:20-CV-2518 (SDNY).
[5] 1:20-CV-2472 (SDNY).

York's most vulnerable populations. While we welcome the transition to the Biden administration, it is clear that the need for high-quality immigration legal representation services will continue unabated. Many features of the immigration legal landscape that necessitate our services and interventions pre-date the Trump administration and continue under the current one. We note that there were more deportations under President Obama than any other president, until Trump. Even if Biden's administration were to reverse Trump's policies and revert to those of the Obama era, there would still be a substantial need for representation for New Yorkers fighting removal.

Further, other recent changes to the immigration legal landscape, such as the need for increased federal court interventions for detained clients, resulted from Supreme Court decisions endorsing mandatory detention regimes and not from policies specific to the Trump administration, and we expect they will continue under the Biden administration. In addition, it should be noted that the vast majority of the initial steps taken to change immigration enforcement priorities and explore broader immigration reform by the Biden administration have focused primarily on the non-detained immigrant population, and offer little relief to the hundreds of New Yorkers already held in ICE detention.

In addition, we anticipate asylum seekers to continue coming from Central America – perhaps in increased numbers following the end of the Migration Protection Protocol (also known as the "Remain in Mexico" policy) – and this population will continue to require access to our services to ensure they do not face forced return to an unstable and unsafe country of origin. The recent high volume of unaccompanied children being taken into custody at the southern border further points to the need for the specialized services provided by the ICARE providers. Unaccompanied noncitizen

children are an extremely vulnerable population, with the pandemic further complicating the very real difficulties facing advocates in attempting to represent them and ensuring their wellbeing. As a result of the growing numbers of children arriving at the border together with COVID-19 protocols to prevent overcrowding and potential transmission, many children have faced prolonged period in Customs and Border Protection custody as they await transfer to Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) shelters or relocation with parents or relatives in the United States. After being forced to make what is often a long and dangerous journey in the middle of a global public health emergency, it is vital that this population continue to be able to access immigration legal services to ensure they are secure immigration relief and have a fresh start and start a new life. Many of the children who were being held at the border have recently been released into the U.S., with an 88% decline in Border Patrol detentions during roughly April 2021,[6] with many of those children expected to be reunited with family or other trusted adults in New York City, as we have seen with prior influxes of unaccompanied minors.

Further, with Temporary Protected Status (TPS) announced for Venezuela on March 9, 2021 and for Myanmar/Burma on May 24, 2021, with a new initial TPS designation announced for Haiti on May 23, 2021, with the likelihood of new initial TPS designation for the other countries such as Nepal, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Sudan, and possible immigration relief for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) registrants and TPS holders through the budget reconciliation process, or some other form of immigration relief that may be passed by Congress or announced by the Biden

[6] Camilo Montoya-Galvez, "Number of unaccompanied migrant children held by Border Patrol falls 88% in 5 weeks," CBS News (May 3, 2021), https://www.cbsnews.com/news/immigration-migrant-children-border-patrol/

administration this year, we will likely see a significant increase in demand for assistance with pursuing affirmative immigration relief in New York. It is vital that the City continue to invest in immigration legal services to ensure providers are able to meet what may be overwhelming levels of need for assistance unseen in recent years.

Respectfully submitted,

Hasan Shafiqullah
*Attorney-in-Charge*
Immigration Law Unit

**TESTIMONY**

The Legal Aid Society

to

The New York City Council

Committee on Finance

May 25, 2021

The Legal Aid Society
199 Water Street
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The Legal Aid Society submits this testimony and thanks City Council for inviting our thoughts on New York City's budget for fiscal year 2021-22.

The Legal Aid Society is the nation's largest and oldest provider of legal services to low-income families and individuals. From offices in all five boroughs, the Society annually provides legal assistance to low-income families and individuals in some 300,000 legal matters involving civil, criminal and juvenile rights problems.

Our Juvenile Rights Practice provides comprehensive representation as attorneys for children who appear before the New York City Family Court in abuse, neglect, juvenile delinquency, and other proceedings affecting children's rights and welfare. Last year, our Juvenile Rights staff represented more than 33,000 children. At the same time, our Criminal Defense Practice ("CDP") provides indigent criminal defense to individuals as young as 13 charged in adult court, includes the Adolescent Intervention and Diversion Project. Many thousands of CDP's clients are school age teenagers and young adults. Annually, our Civil Practice works on more than 52,500 individual legal matters, including advocacy for families with school-age children. Our Criminal, Civil and Juvenile practices engage in educational advocacy for our clients, in the areas of special education, school discipline, and school placement and programming. In addition to representing these children each year in trial and appellate courts, we also pursue impact litigation and other law reform initiatives on behalf of our clients.

Our perspective comes from our daily contacts with children, adolescents, and their families, and also from our frequent interactions with the courts, social service providers, and city agencies including the NYC Department of Education (DOE), NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and the Administration for Children's Services (ACS).

Students in the Child Welfare, Juvenile and Criminal Legal Systems

In 2019 there were 7,804 children in foster care in New York City.[1] Approximately 6,000 of them were school aged. Children in foster care face unique challenges in accessing education and this can make them a vulnerable group of learners. Nationally between 35% and 47 % of children and youth in foster care have been identified as students with disabilities who require special education services.[2] Seventeen- and eighteen-year-old students in foster care have an average 7th grade reading level.[3] In New York City only 42.2% of students in foster care graduated on time in 2020, the lowest graduation rate of any student group and 36.6 percentage points lower than the rate for students not in foster care.[4]

Students with juvenile court involvement experience also face educational challenges. These include children and youth held in ACS custody in non-secure and secure detention (including Crossroads and Horizon); held in non-secure and limited secure placement (the juvenile system's analog for sentenced youth) under ACS supervision, whose services are provided by the DOE through Passages Academy, and students held in NYC DOC custody on Rikers Island, whose educational services are provided by the DOE at East River Academy. At a recent New York City Council hearing, the DOE's Executive Superintendent who oversees the DOE's Alternative Schools District, which includes these schools, testified that approximately 65% of Passages' students were identified as having disabilities and an IEP which mandated

[1] New York City Administration for Children's Services Division of Policy, Planning and Measurement, Office of Research and Analysis, Unpublished CCRS Data (2013 - 2018); Children in Foster Care by Borough/CD of Foster Care Placement (2019) https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/2020/incarefostercare.pdf.
[2] National Working Group on Foster Care and Education "Fostering Success in Education: National Factsheet on the Educational Outcomes of Children in Foster Care" April 2018 http://fosteringchamps.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/NationalEducationDatasheet2018-2.pdf; Courtney, M.E., Terao, S., & Bost, N. (2004). Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Conditions of youth preparing to leave state care. P 40 Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.
[3] *Id.* at 2.
[4] See New York State Education Department, NYC Public Schools Graduation Rate Data (4 Year Outcome as of August 2020) Available at https://data.nysed.gov/gradrate.php?year=2020&instid=7889678368

Special Education services.[5] This reflects a rate more than three times higher than that in the general community of New York City students.[6] Many additional youth involved in the juvenile or criminal legal systems are academically behind, but have not been identified as having a disability – often because they have never been evaluated. Consequently, these students require additional support to reengage in school and to ensure future educational and vocational opportunities, thereby preventing recidivism.

It is imperative that the City invest in children in the custody of ACS and the DOC to ensure that they are able to engage in school and to obtain the educational and vocational services to which they are entitled and which will support successful outcomes of higher education and employment. We therefore ask that the City Council provide funding and oversight to support the DOE in 1) the creation of an office for children in foster care, 2) the provision of school bus transportation to all children in foster care from K – 6 years old, 3) expansion of high quality high school equivalency and vocational programs within the City's detention facilities, and provide supplemental funding to provide tutoring and coaching services to all children and youth in detention facilities who require academic remediation.

[5] Testimony of Dr. Tim Lisante, NYC Department of Education Superintendent, District 79 at Oversight: Educational Programming in Jails and Juvenile Detention; Joint Hearing Before New York City Council's Committees on Education, Criminal Justice, and General Welfare. April 21, 2021.

[6] It is estimated that approximately 19% of New York City students have IEPs. What are the Contours of NYC's Special Education Landscape?, The Research Alliance for New York City Schools, New York Univ. (last visited May 19, 2021), http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/research-alliance/research/spotlight-nyc-schools/what-are-contours-nycs-special-education-landscape#:~:text=But%20students%20in%20New%20York,just%207%20percent%20in%20Houston. Earlier reporting with respect to East River Academy finds about 39% of students had IEPs. Rikers Island Education Report: Educational Programming for Adolescents and Young Adults at Rikers Island - Local Law 168 of 2017, N.Y.C. Dep't. of Educ., *available at* https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/local-law-168-d79-english.pdf?Status=Temp&sfvrsn=7cc4ef53_2.

### 1. DOE Office for Children in Foster Care

In March 2018, the City's Interagency Foster Care Task Force, whose membership included the Commissioner of the Administration for Children's Services and the DOE Chief Operating Officer, recommended that the DOE establish an office to focus on the needs of students in foster care, similar to the DOE Office of Student's in Temporary Housing.[7] Unfortunately this recommendation has not yet been acted upon. Advocates for Children and the Legal Aid Society recently released a joint report outlining the need for such an office.[8]

Currently, responsibility for children in foster care rests with a wide range of different DOE staff members and offices: enrollment, transportation, special education, guidance, office of legal services, and academic policy, to name a few. There is no central DOE resource that schools, foster care agencies or families can turn to when they have questions about students in foster care. There is also no central resource to assist in setting policies relating to school stability, transportation, parental rights and involvement, access to records, consent for special education evaluations and services, court orders, data sharing and analysis, or credit transfers for students in foster care who change schools. A DOE office for students in foster care would help provide accurate and authoritative information about the educational rights of students in foster care. At the very least, the DOE should establish a senior level position to focus on the needs of these vulnerable students.

### 2. Bus Service for Students in Foster Care

As students return to in person instruction, the DOE must ensure that every child in foster care is able to get to their school, including for the Summer Rising program. More

[7] *See* Report of the Interagency Foster Care Task Force, March 2018 https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/testimony/2018/TaskForceReport.pdf

[8] *See* Building a Network of Support: The Case for a DOE Office for Students in Foster Care, May 2021. https://legalaidnyc.org/news/doe-support-students-foster-care/

than just being the right thing to do for children in foster care, New York City has a legal obligation to ensure that children in foster care are able to get to school. The federal Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2008 and the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 require school districts and child welfare systems to collaborate in preserving school stability for children in foster care and in providing adequate transportation.

Additionally, NYS Education Law § 3244, provides that the school district where the child attends school must provide transportation to and from the foster care placement and the child's school of origin. Despite these federal and state requirements, transportation remains a significant barrier to preserving school stability for students in foster care in New York City. In 2019 and 2020 the Administration agreed to use existing resources to ensure busing for students in foster care.[9] The City has failed to keep this promise.

Currently, the DOE permits students in foster care in preschool through 6th grade to submit an Emergency Evaluation Request for busing. The DOE approves such requests if, and only if, the foster child can easily be added to an existing route. The DOE will not create a new route or significantly alter an existing route to accommodate a child in foster care. Data provided by the DOE pursuant to Local Law 34 shows that during the period from January 2019 to June 2019, only 65% of students in foster care who applied for transportation received DOE bus service. Twenty percent received a MetroCard instead, which is entirely inadequate for this age group. Young children are unable to safely and comfortably travel alone on public transportation using a MetroCard. Foster parents often have other obligations, including employment and the care of other children that prevent them from accompanying a foster child during a long

[9] *See* FY 2020 Adopted Expense Budget Adjustment Summary, June 2019, available at https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2019/12/Fiscal-2020-Schedule-C-Final-Merge.pdf

commute. Foster care case workers are also unable to accompany children to and from school due to their primary job responsibilities.

When DOE denies busing, ACS tries to piece together a transportation plan, which typically involves the use of expensive taxis, car services and paid chaperones. These ad hoc transportation arrangements are difficult to manage and costly to taxpayers.

When children in foster care are denied DOE busing, they are often effectively forced to change schools. This change compounds the trauma these children typically experience by being removed from their homes and placed in foster care, causing them to suffer further emotional, social, and academic harm. No student in foster care should be forced to change schools or foster home placements due to lack of transportation – students in foster care are entitled to stable foster homes and stable school placements. We urge City Council to hold the DOE accountable for providing yellow bus transportation to all children in foster care from preschool through 6th grade. We ask the City Council to include sufficient funding in the budget (approximately 5 million dollars) to ensure that the DOE provides legally mandated bus service for students in foster care.

### 3. Ensuring Meaningful Educational Programming for Incarcerated Youth

The Legal Aid Society knows that our clients, like other young people, want to achieve educationally and become contributing members of the community. Unfortunately, many of our clients have not been provided with the tools they need. Incarcerated youth need specific and targeted interventions including: tutoring and remediation for those students who are behind academically; access to high school equivalency programs and testing while incarcerated; and access to high quality vocational or certification programs that are relevant to the labor market.

### A. Quality High School Equivalency (HSE) and Vocational Opportunities for Incarcerated Children

As a result of legislation transferring detained 16 and 17 year old youth from DOC to ACS custody, the average age of students at Passages Academy has risen. Those youth, are often interested in obtaining their high school equivalency diplomas. Advocates have been discussing opportunities to expand accessibility to prepare for and to take the TASC exam with the DOE, and ask the Council to help support such expansion so that youth can return to the community prepared to continue to higher education, vocational programs, or employment.

Many youth and young adults with court involvement are interested in joining the labor force. These youth need access to high quality vocational programs that will provide them with practical skills that are relevant to the labor market. The DOE runs several very successful vocational programs such as Co-op Tech that provide students with marketable skills. We recommend that the DOE expand or replicate these programs into Passages Academy. This would be a tremendous benefit to youth who would then have marketable skills upon their release.

### B. Coaching and Tutoring Services for Incarcerated Students

As discussed above, many students with court involvement are behind academically and need assistance. Remote learning during the COVID epidemic has only exacerbated this need. During the pandemic, the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA) and the Kite received funding which allowed them to provide individualized tutoring and coaching to youth attending various Passages Academy sites. The program was successful and many students benefited from those services. Engagement in school within the Horizons and Crossroads has been at an all-time high. However, the funding runs out at the end of this school year. The Legal Aid Society has learned

that approximately $140,000 has been allocated to ACS by the Young Men's Initiative (YMI) to provide these services going forward. However, this will allow ACS to provide only 2 hours per week of services to 25 students, a small percentage of the total number of students in detention. This is insufficient. We are asking the City Council to provide additional funding that will provide for continued academic tutoring and coaching services to these youth.

Many thanks for the opportunity to provide testimony. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Contact: Melinda Andra
Supervising Attorney
Education Advocacy Project
Legal Aid Society
Juvenile Rights Practice
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Aimee Todoroff
Managing Director
League of Independent Theater

# Testimony to City Council on the Proposed 2022 Budget

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to you today regarding the proposed FY2022 Budget. My name is Aimee Todoroff; she/hers. I am Managing Director of the League of Independent Theater, an advocacy organization representing NYC arts workers who perform in or run theaters with 99 seats or less and non-traditional theater spaces, often without institutional support. Our members create new theater across all five boroughs, telling intimate stories in the language of their community at a ticket price all New Yorkers can afford. They do this while providing a cultural anchor as well as driving the economic health of the entire neighborhood.

We estimate roughly 60,000 theater makers work in theater in New York, and virtually every single one passes through a small, independent theater.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has devastated the Indie Theater community, along with independent arts workers across all sectors. According to the recently released report from State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, the arts & culture sector is the industry hardest hit, and arts workers are at a 66% full unemployment rate. This figure matches the data from LIT's coalition partner, Music Workers Alliance. Keep in mind, most artists are already forced to work 3-5 jobs to make ends meet in NYC. Behind this figure of 66% full unemployment rate are real people like my friend Yolanda, who has spent 20+ years working in the arts in NYC as both an award-winning performer and arts educator. In one week in March 2020, she lost all 4 of the regular jobs she needed to cover rent on her single room occupancy in Fort Greene. Every dollar of her Federal stimulus went to pay the landlord back rent.

It is universally agreed that reviving the arts & culture sector is a vital component to New York City's recovery. Small arts alone generate $1.3Billion in economic output. That is not counting the substantial economic contributions of the CIGs. However, most small arts makers are either fiscally sponsored or work independently, and therefore do not quality for much of DCLA's funding.

In this moment of crisis, we call on the council to expand the budget for arts and culture, and to create more pathways for an equitable distribution of funds.

The CIG program is a proven success. By working with the City, the CIGs are able to form a bulwark against the uncertainty that comes during recession, pandemic or other unforeseen events, allowing the CIGs to continue their work of serving the people of New York as well generating much needed economic dividends. The CIGs are able to leverage their knowledge and input with the city to enhance programming and to work in partnership with organizations like NYC&Co and other programs. They also have access to benefits like negotiated ConEd rates. Critically, we have seen the ability for the CIGs to become the mechanism through which the City can distribute

regranting funds quickly, as in the case of the recently launched arts workers program- a program meant to reach the most impacted individual artists that is currently being funneled through the CIGs.

We ask the Council to recognize the success of the CIGs and create an analogous group of small, independent arts organizations that would have the same rights, access, and abilities to work with the DCLA to reach the independent arts workers, like Yolanda, that are currently outside the scope of institutional support.

A Small Arts Group would have the same ability as the CIGs to redistribute grants quickly, with a focus on communities often left behind or that larger institutions can't readily reach, immediately creating exponential opportunities for equity within the Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), Disabled+, Immigrants, LGBTQ+, ESL, the poor and other communities. Small arts venues, especially theaters, are burdened with a commercial ConEd rate, often equalling a 13$^{th}$ month of rent even when those venues are non-profits. A Small Arts Group would be able to negotiate for an equitable ConEd rate; at a moment when 75% of small arts venues are facing eviction the moment the moratorium is lifted, the ability to finally get a fair ConEd rate after years of fighting would be a much-needed lifeline. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, many small arts organizations mobilized to feed their communities and share resources like PPE. They were able to do this because they are trusted members of the community. Imagine how much more effective those efforts could be with the full cooperation of the city behind them.

Our small arts organization have an outsized impact. According to many studies, for every $1 spent at a small, independent arts venue, $12 stay within the community. That means the $20 ticket to an indie show at a neighborhood venue creates $240 in revenue for restaurants, bars and mom & pop shops that rely on the foot traffic arts venues bring. The surest way to guarantee a NYC recovery is not to starve artists, but to fully invest in artists and arts workers. To cut the budget for arts and culture is disastrous. To simply restore the budget to pre-pandemic levels is short-sighted. The best investment we can make in the future of NYC is an investment in the DCLA and in the independent arts & culture sector.

Thank you.




**Testimony of:**

**David Long**
**Executive Director, The Liberty Fund**

**Before the:**

**New York City Council**

**May 25, 2021**

THE LIBERTY FUND

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to the NYC City Council. My name is Dave Long and I am the Executive Director of The Liberty Fund.

For 4 years (FYs 2017-2020), the NYC Council has been our major partner. However, our NYC Council funding was 100% eliminated for FY2021, jeopardizing justice reform previously made prior to the confluences of COVID and social unrest last year.

We hope NYC Council will renew for FY2022 to provide our essential services for NYC's most vulnerable, and help lead the nation in continued justice reform.

**The Liberty Fund - An Adaptable Innovative Model for Continued Justice Reform**

***Please view our attached flyer, as well the program impacts and client success stories on our website for more details on how our model works.****

Through our bail and ROR services, The Liberty Fund provides voluntary case management (including service plans, wellness calls, court reminders and emergency needs) to connect clients to best-fit workforce development and homelessness referrals in order to stabilize their lives and prevent further recidivism. Our groundbreaking approach presents a pathway to continued reform for NYC, as follows:

- **No Net Widening** - Our program is completely voluntary and places no additional court mandates on our participants, as these mandates can potentially cause further and protracted entanglement in the criminal justice system. We also exclusively work with defense counsel for referrals, thus avoiding any damaging, net-widening effects which result from other pre-trial programs that rely upon the prosecutor and/or judge to approve eligibility.

- **Restorative Approach** - Combined with our person-centered approach, our voluntary nature helps build rapport, trust and personal agency for those who have suffered long-term systemic oppression. Our low-touch engagement is leveraged at court for effective time usage.

- **Direct Social Service Access** - The Liberty Fund ensures that the recent criminal justice reforms remain consistent while filling a critical service gap, especially in the COVID landscape. We serve all level misdemeanors, especially those individuals charged with lower level/nonviolent crimes who have had several prior interactions with the criminal justice system. We tend to work with an older, male population, many of whom are homeless. Key demographics for our clients served include: 87% are men; 62% are age 30 or older; 53% are Black; and 35% Hispanic.

**The Continued Need of The Liberty Fund**

In January 2020, New York State drastically reduced misdemeanor bail (along with speedy trial and discovery reforms), allowing more people to be released on their own recognizance (ROR) into the community. This reform is based on the growing body of research that public safety is improved when individuals are allowed to remain in the community and provide support for their families while resolving their legal matters.

As a proactive response to this monumental reform effort, The Liberty Fund planned a strategic pivot to the ROR Case Management Program by providing voluntary enhanced case management to this vulnerable population. Amounting to nearly 80,000 people in 2018, the ROR pretrial population could benefit from our interventions.

Today, the need for The Liberty Fund remains relevant:

- **Bail Reform Rollbacks** - Bail reforms were modified July 1, 2020, resulting in more people detained on bail. The Liberty Fund is NYC's ***ONLY*** remaining charitable bail fund to serve these individuals.

- **Racial and Social Justice** - Misdemeanor bail fundamentally penalizes poverty and rewards financial privilege, while Black/Brown people continue to be disproportionately arrested for misdemeanor crimes in NYC.

- **Rising Detention Costs** - Pretrial detention is a significant financial burden to the community. The NYC Comptroller's office has placed the recent cost of incarcerating an individual in New York City at a record $1,226 per day in 2020, not counting community losses from disruption of work, childcare, housing. Misdemeanor cases can often range up to three to five months to resolve.

- **Detention Threatens Public Health** - New York City released hundreds of people from jails during the height of the pandemic, but the jail population is rising again, and an increase in infections could spread the virus beyond jail and throughout the city.

- **Filling a Critical Service Gap** - Few NYC programs like The Liberty Fund focus on the misdemeanor population, especially older and homeless individuals, resulting in higher recidivism rates if not addressed.

- **NYC Parole Population** - Through our dynamic partnerships with defense counsel agencies, we are exploring ways to address and serve the stagnant parole violation population, which are non-violent, non-criminal offenses, and threaten efforts to close the Rikers jail complex.

Thank you again for your time and consideration,

Dave Long
Executive Director - Liberty Fund

# THE LIBERTY FUND

## Mission

*The Liberty Fund reduces the pretrial jail population, prevents the poorest New Yorkers from having their lives upended and their freedom sacrificed, and provides support in order to avoid future interactions with the criminal justice system. We achieve our mission by providing pretrial services, including bail and robust case management, to any qualifying bail or ROR client throughout the pendency of their court case.*

## Target Population:

*Vulnerable, low-income individuals:*

- Misdemeanor charge and bail set at $2000 or less.
- Released on recognizance (ROR).
- Voluntarily agree to participate.
- Past demographics have included 87% men; 53% Black; 35% Latinx; 38% Ages 20-29; 42% Ages 30-39.

## Programming and Funding Use

### INNOVATIVE MODEL

**Our model has four innovative features for impact:**

- ***Pretrial*** *- Interventions are initiated at the most critical touchpoint for success.*
- ***Voluntary*** *- Non-mandated services ensure no additional restrictions placed on clients to prevent further "net widening" as they stabilize their lives.*
- ***Person-Centered*** *- Services determined by client to better meet individual needs, promote personal agency and connect to best-fit services.*
- ***Court-Based*** *- Low-touch interventions leveraged during court appointments for effective time usage.*

### DIRECT SERVICES PROVIDED

**Each client participates in the following services:**

- ***Case Management*** *- Intake, needs assessments, service action plans, and wellness calls.*
- ***Critical Court Needs*** *- Client court-reminders and emergency needs, such as MetroCards, food vouchers, hygiene kits.*
- ***Workforce Development and Homelessness Interventions*** *- Referrals to best-fit housing/job training programs.*
- ***Access to Social Service Team*** *- Services led by our Social Services Director (LCSW) and 3 certified Case Managers who double as licensed New York State bail bond agents.*

## Questions? Don't hesitate to contact us.

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*Executive Director*
*dlong@libertyfund.nyc*
*(646) 373 0327*

*Joelle Servais*
*Development & Communications Director*
*jservais@libertyfund.nyc*
*(929) 461 3678*

**Check out more at www.libertyfund.nyc**

## Community Benefits

**Bail Reform Rollbacks** - Bail reforms were modified July 1, 2020, resulting in more people detained on bail. The Liberty Fund is NYC's ONLY remaining charitable bail fund to serve these individuals.

**Racial and Social Justice** - Misdemeanor bail fundamentally penalizes poverty and rewards financial privilege, while black/brown people continue to be disproportionately arrested for misdemeanor crimes in NYC, including non-violent, non-criminal parole violations.

**Filling a Critical Service Gap** - Few NYC programs like The Liberty Fund focus on the misdemeanor population, especially older and homeless individuals, resulting in higher recidivism rates if not addressed.

**Social Service Impacts** - Since 2017, we have helped 1,200+ clients access community-based services, prevented 5,000+ days of detention, facilitated an annual cost saving of $3million, and achieved an 87% client court appearance rate.

## Partnerships

**Defense Agencies** - including NYCDS, Legal Aid, Bronx Defender Services, Brooklyn Defender Services, and 18B attorneys.

**NYC Parole Population** - including exploring ways to address and serve the stagnant parole violation population on Rikers Island, which threaten closing the Rikers jail complex.

**Attorney Communicatio**n - as a best practice to help relay the most current information to all parties.

**Resource Manual** - with a citywide network of social service organizations specifically adjusted to navigate the COVID-19 crisis.

## Past NYC Council Funding

The Liberty Fund received funding for operations from the NYC Council in FYs 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020.

Our NYC Council funding was 100% eliminated for FY2021, jeopardizing justice reform during the confluences of COVID and social unrest, including NYC's parole population.

We hope NYC Council will renew for FY2022 to provide our essential services for NYC's most vulnerable, and help lead the nation in continued justice reform.

## The Liberty Fund is citywide. Our clients have lived in these zip codes:

**BRONX:** 10451; 10452; 10453; 10454; 10455; 10456; 10457; 10458; 10459; 10460; 10462; 10463; 10465; 10466; 10467; 10468; 10469; 10472; 10473; 10474; 10475

**BROOKLYN:** 11202; 11203; 11205; 11206; 11207; 11208; 11209; 11210; 11211; 11212; 11213; 11215; 11216; 11217; 11218; 11221; 11222; 11223; 11224; 11225; 11226; 11229; 11230; 11231; 11233; 11237

**MANHATTAN**: 10001; 10002; 10009; 10010; 10011; 10012; 10014; 10016; 10017; 10019; 10023; 10024; 10025; 10026; 10027; 10028; 10029; 10030; 10031; 10032; 10033; 10034; 10035; 10036; 10037; 10039; 10040

**QUEENS:** 11377; 11354; 11361; 11367; 11368; 11373; 11385; 11411; 11412; 11413; 11418; 11422; 11429

**STATEN ISLAND:** 10301; 10302; 10303; 10304; 10308; 10309; 10310

**Testimony of Legal Information for Families Today (LIFT)**
**For the Executive Budget Hearing**
**Presented to the New York City Council by Cathy Cramer, CEO**
**Citywide Initiative Application Number 108085**
**May 24, 2021**

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Legal Information for Families Today
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My name is Cathy Cramer and I am the CEO of Legal Information for Families Today, usually called LIFT. I thank Speaker Corey Johnson, Finance Chair Council Member Danny Dromm, General Welfare Committee Chair Council Member Steve Levin, Veterans Committee Chair Council Member Eric Dinowitz, and the entire City Council for the opportunity to speak about an oft-ignored aspect of the legal system—Family Court.

All of us at LIFT are profoundly grateful to the City Council for your ongoing support of our services. Without your core funding, we could be unable to serve the 25,000 New York families in crisis each year. I deeply hope that in Fiscal Year 2022, the Council will continue its support and restore this funding to the amount LIFT was provided in Fiscal Year 2020 – **$485,000 through the Legal Information and Support for Families Initiative, $60,000 through the Legal Services for Veterans Initiative**, and consideration for support through the **Family Advocacy and Guardianship Support Initiative** – which will enable us to meet the unprecedent demand for our services to help New Yorkers without legal representation navigate through the Family Court system and justice systems.

With our team of lawyers, LIFT is one of the few organizations in New York City that works directly with pro se litigants in Family Court. Each year, there are over 250,000 filings in the New York City Family Courts. In most cases, the litigant does not qualify for free, court-appointed representation, even though they cannot afford to hire a lawyer. A staggering 96% of those served by LIFT proceed in Family Court without an attorney—for issues fundamental to the well-being of children such as child support, custody, visitation and protection in domestic violence cases.

The pandemic has had a profound impact on the operations of the Family Court in New York City over the past year. The Court is operating completely virtually and, until recently, was only hearing cases they deemed to be emergencies. No new child support cases have been heard in the last 12 months, even though thousands of New Yorkers have lost their jobs. There have been no opportunities to modify child support during this time and arrears keep accruing. The Court is now working on pending cases that were filed before March of 2020. The backlog of child support cases alone will take years to resolve. In addition, many of our clients do not have access to the technology to participate in a virtual court. Traditionally, Family Court has always been physically open to everyone, but now the digital divide is hurting people who are struggling with profound challenges exacerbated by the pandemic and so much uncertainty.

Now in our 25th year of serving New York City's families, LIFT works with litigants to achieve their legal goals during a time of unprecedented crisis. Over the past year, we have provided about 25,000 New York families with services ranging from quick answers to in-depth legal guidance. We served mothers (45%) and fathers (39%), as well as grandparents, other relatives

and non-relatives. Most of our clients live in the City's low-income neighborhoods. More than 76% are people of color and 14% are monolingual Spanish-speaking.

The pandemic has accelerated the growth in the number of New York City families confronting a crisis—or multiple crises—pertaining to family law. LIFT's clients frequently tell us of pressing issues that include the following: non-custodial parents taking children out of state in violation of New York Family Court orders; parents risking coronavirus exposure while keeping their jobs as essential workers, thus posing challenges to safe visitation with their children; increased incidents of domestic violence when people are forced into quarantine with their abusers; guardianship due to death of a parent or caretakers; and many problems around child support payments. The Family Court relies on LIFT to address the urgent needs of families who have been forced to wait indefinitely for their cases to be heard in court. Until the Court fully reopens, they are sending many of their callers to LIFT, and we are working to prepare their cases for when the Court will start to hear them, which will likely be many months away.

LIFT operates a Family Law Helpline that receives 15,000 phone calls every year. Due to the pandemic and the Family Court's more frequent referrals, the Helpline has served record-breaking numbers of callers in recent months—increasing from a typical average of 60 calls per day to our current average of 125-150 calls per day. Legal consultations with our staff attorneys, which took place inside the Family Courthouses before the pandemic, now take place over the phone or on LIFT's innovative, virtual platform, Family Legal Connection. Our team is handling a 50% increase in full legal consultations. In addition, LIFT is rapidly expanding our partnerships with the private bar, and training dozens of volunteer attorneys to provide pro bono legal advice to our clients on Family Legal Connection. We also run programs in communities,

in order to reach potential litigants before they come to Family Court. Our expanded community program focuses on veterans, criminal justice-involved people, immigrants, and domestic violence survivors with Family Court issues. We run legal clinics, workshops, and webinars in partnership with community-based nonprofits, and we distribute—throughout the City and online—easy-to-read Legal Resource Guides on over 40 different family law topics that are translated into eight languages. We also work closely with our sister organizations to make non-family-law referrals.

LIFT has a unique relationship with the Family Court and we partner with them to implement system-wide reforms to increase efficiency and improve the litigant's experience. We are in a unique position to do "on the ground reporting" to administrators and help suggest strategic solutions. During the pandemic, the Court asked LIFT to assist litigants in completing and submitting forms that serve as a request for child support modifications, thus relieving the Court of a huge administrative burden. We also launched a Personal Protective Equipment safety program to distribute PPE, LIFT Helpline cards, and information packets across all five boroughs, to individuals and families who are still arriving at Family Court, not realizing they cannot go inside.

Although the Family Court is experiencing a difficult period, LIFT is part of the solution for both the litigants and the Court. Thank you again for considering our testimony and for ensuring LIFT's future.

Application reference numbers for LIFT's FY22 City Council requests:

Citywide Initiative Application: 108085

Legal Services for Veterans Initiative: 104627

Family Guardianship initiative: 110673

My name is Jennifer Ramalhete and I am the Program Director at Little Meadows early Childhood Center located in Fresh Meadows, Queens. I am here to discuss the need to address the shortage of preschool special education classes and provide salary parity to teachers of these classes. Little Meadows is constantly losing teachers due to the inability to pay them as much as they will get paid as general education teachers. Just last week we lost one of our special education teachers. She informed us that she will not be returning in September. She was hired as a PK-3 teacher for $20,000 more, which is substantially more then we can offer her. We now must begin the difficult process of trying to find a qualified teacher for our special needs students. Under the City's salary parity agreement, other early childhood teachers will receive salary increases in October 2021, leading even more preschool special class teachers to flock to general education classes and leaving children with disabilities without teachers.

LiveOn NY

Making New York a better place to age

**New York City Council**
**Committee on Finance**
**Chair Council Member Dromm**
**May 25, 2021**
**Oversight - Executive Budget Hearing**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at the executive budget hearing.

LiveOn NY's members include more than 100 community-based nonprofits that provide core services which allow all New Yorkers to thrive in our communities as we age, including senior centers, home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing, elder abuse prevention, caregiver support, NORCs, and case management. With our members, we work to make New York a better place to age.

As New York City begins to emerge from a pandemic that took the lives of thousands of individuals, many of whom were older New Yorkers, and as this budget, built upon millions in new stimulus funds, will plant the seeds of recovery for our City at-large, the stakes have rarely been higher. As stated by the New York City Independent Budget Office, "the influx of stimulus funding makes this plan one of the most consequential city budgets produced in years. The priorities set forth and decisions made regarding the current financial plan, specifically with respect to how these stimulus funds are spent, are decisions whose effects will reverberate well into the next administration."[1]

**With this in mind, LiveOn NY is appreciative of the investments included in the Executive Budget to both better support older New Yorkers through programs such as Senior Centers, as well as to support the human services sector at large.** More specifically, we are deeply appreciative of the decision to fully restore funding for the Indirect Cost Rate initiative; implement the $10 million of outstanding model Senior Center budget funding promises; and include $39.4 million towards Year 1 of the new Community Care Plan, which will expand and better support Senior Centers and NORCs. These initial investments are an important step towards bolstering a long-underfunded sector and a system that has been critical to supporting older New Yorkers through the historically difficult fight against COVID-19.

**However, given that the Department for the Aging (DFTA) budget remains at less than ½ of 1% of the City budget despite older adults representing a rapidly increasing 20% of the population, the City must go farther in its Adopted Budget to truly set the trajectory for a recovery that leaves no New Yorker behind.** Moreover, to wholly embrace this budget's theme, "A Recovery for All of Us," the City must do more to ensure that older New Yorkers, particularly low-income and Black and brown older New Yorkers, are included in that recovery.

Centered around the inequities made apparent during the pandemic, LiveOn NY first proposes three major investments to better address senior hunger, the digital divide, and wages for essential workers.

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1 https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/double-shot-an-infusion-of-federal-funds-boosts-citys-bottom-line-as-vaccines-bring-optimism-for-economic-recovery-executive-budget-report-may-2021.pdf

1. **$16.6 million for Home-delivered Meals.** Such funding would provide $13.6 million for weekday meals and $3 million for weekend and holiday meals, both to increase capacity to meet new demand and bring the per-meal rate to the national average. The home-delivered meals program, which is different from GetFood, serves older New Yorkers who, due to chronic illness, mobility limitation, or disability, will remain homebound long after COVID-19 fully subsides. For many meal recipients, this meal delivery represents not only a significant source of nutrients, but the only contact they will have with the outside world that day. Despite the lifeline that this program represents, it has been chronically underfunded for years, with funding lagging far behind the national average, putting the program and the non-profits that administer it, financially at risk year after year.
2. **$4.4 Million to address the digital divide.** $4.4 million of this funding would allow for improved technology and service access for older adults by investing in the technology infrastructure at Senior Centers, as well as creating mechanisms to directly support individual access to technology.
    a. As the City works to combat the digital divide, it must also **invest an additional $5.89 million to leverage technology to better connect older adults to the services one might need to age in community.** More specifically, this investment would broaden the ability for Senior Centers to market their services, and to create an online resource directory, similar to that of the Parks Department, where an older adult might more easily determine offerings from Senior Centers in their neighborhood.
3. **$48 Million Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for essential human services workers.** Throughout COVID-19, human services workers across sectors have stepped up to provide critical services in new ways, including to keep New Yorkers older New Yorkers fed, assist older adults in receiving vaccinations, and combating the life-threatening effects of social isolation. Despite this, the wages of these workers, the majority of whom are women and Black and brown individuals, are slated to remain stagnant in a City where costs are notoriously high. It is critical that the FY22 budget rectify this, allocating $48 million in funding to ensure all human services workers can receive a 3% COLA that is not only necessary, but is deserved.
    a. **Further, an additional $1.7 million is needed to ensure parity for NORC Directors to Senior Center staff of similar positions.** Without such an investment, disparity, created as a direct result of City Contracts, will only continue to be exacerbated in the coming year.

**In addition to these new investments, the City must look to restore and baseline all aging Executive one-time funds, including funding for Senior Centers located in NYCHA.**

Recognizing the significant role that City Council discretionary plays in meeting the hyper-local needs within districts, these funds must also be restored and bolstered as appropriate. Including by:

1. **Restore Council aging discretionary funding to FY20 levels.**
    a. A restoration of $2,040,000 that was previously made available through the "Healthy Aging" initiative, must be re-allocated, whether by restoring this initiative or adding the amount to a similar initiative such as Support Our Seniors.
    b. Beyond re-allocating funds that were reduced in FY21, due to budgetary constraints, it is critical that City Council maintain funding for the long-important initiatives such as:

NORCs, Immigrant Senior Centers, Support Our Seniors, and all aging discretionary initiatives.

2. **Bolster Council discretionary funding to meet rising needs**
    a. Invest an additional $950,000, for a total of $2.86 million, in the Geriatric Mental Health Initiative to better equip providers to respond to the rising mental health concerns that have resulted from isolation experienced during extended periods of stay at home orders experienced by older New Yorkers throughout COVID-19.

New York's more than 1.8 million older adults are counting on these investments to demonstrate meaningful action for aging in response to COVID-19.

But we know that this action can't wait. **The Administration must also immediately authorize the Department for the Aging (DFTA) to spend the $30 million in currently projected 'cost-savings' accrued by the agency over the course of FY21.** Rather than having one of the smallest City agencies shoulder the burden of returning cost-savings to the City to balance the current budget, it should instead be invested in ensuring that Senior Centers and services are safe into the future. That would mean purchasing improved ventilation and HVAC systems for all Senior Centers in need to ensure high quality air standards for the population most at-risk to COVID-19. The funds could also go towards one-time technology upgrades, PPE purchases, cleaning supplies, kitchen upgrades for Centers with outdated equipment, and other purchases that, if made now, will promote the safety and sustainability of senior services into the future.

While the needs are vast, the City is poised to meet the unique needs of older adults by strategically using new stimulus investments, state investments, and improved City tax receipts to push the Department for the Aging budget above the ½ of 1% mark once and for all.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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*LiveOn NY's members provide the core, community-based services that allow older adults to thrive in their communities. With a base of more than 100 community-based organizations serving at least 300,000 older New Yorkers annually. Our members provide services ranging from senior centers, congregate and home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing with services, elder abuse prevention services, caregiver supports, case management, transportation, and NORCs. LiveOn NY advocates for increased funding for these vital services to improve both the solvency of the system and the overall capacity of community-based service providers.*

*LiveOn NY also administers a citywide outreach program and staffs a hotline that educates, screens and helps with benefit enrollment including SNAP, SCRIE and others, and also administers the Rights and Information for Senior Empowerment (RISE) program to bring critical information directly to seniors on important topics to help them age well in their communities.*

TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF LOCAL 372 | NYC BOARD OF EDUCATION EMPLOYEES
DISTRICT COUNCIL 37 | AFSCME
TO THE
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING
MAY 25, 2021

Chairman Daniel Dromm, and distinguished members of the City Council Finance Committee, I am Donald Nesbit, Executive Vice President of Local 372 - NYC Board of Education Employees, District Council 37 | AFSCME. I am here today to provide testimony at today's Executive Budget Hearing on behalf of the approximately 24,000 members we represent under the leadership of our President, Shaun D. Francois I.

The thousands of workers Local 372 represents perform essential support services to help the 1.2 million public school children of New York City be learning-ready. Our School Crossing Guards, who remained essential workers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, make sure the children cross the streets safely in their morning and afternoon commutes. Our School Lunch Workers unload, prepare, and serve food each day, including during the summer, and continued to feed both students and members of the community on an essential basis throughout this time of crisis. Our School Aids are with students all throughout the day: they greet the children in the morning, engage in numerous activities to support their educational development, and help the children get to their busses at the end of the day. Our Community Titles, Parent Coordinators, School Neighborhood Workers, and Paraprofessionals work with parents to navigate the Department of Education, and work with the Department of Homeless Services to make sure the children get to school and have a place to sleep at night. Our Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Specialists ("SAPIS") work with students in mental health, needed now more than ever, and the prevention of substance abuse, gun violence, and bullying, as well as gang prevention and mediation.

Many members of Local 372 are also members of the communities in which they work; they are neighbors to students, their families, and some are parents to school children themselves. Our members understand and can relate first hand to the struggles students and families face at home that can impact relationships between students, teachers, principal, parents and others.

I first want to commend the Mayor and the City Council for recognizing the importance of, and the importance of investing in, New York City's public schools and employees. The future that an

education provides for a child is one of the most important obligations we must fulfill. I also want to commend the City for its leadership in prioritizing the health and safety of the over one million students and tens of thousands of teachers and support staff throughout our schools since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic over a year ago.

Essential Workers

It is important for all of us here today to applaud essential workers, including those represented by Local 372, who risk their own health and safety to perform vital services in these times of crisis. Though the school system is largely closed, many of the 9,000 School Lunch Workers and 2,600 School Crossing Guards remained on the job throughout the city through this past year. These workers are placed in harm's way – at risk of exposure to the ongoing pandemic – because their responsibilities play an essential role in keeping the wheels of society turning whether schools are open or not.

That is why these workers need more than just applause – these workers need access to assistance, benefits, and protections that help them safely working as the threat of COVID-19 lingers. These workers need an adequate supply of personal protective equipment ("PPE"), including masks and gloves, to mitigate the risks of transmission. And the City should provide hazard pay (such as contemplated by Int. 1918) to appropriately compensate these essential workers for the sacrifices they must make.

School Crossing Guards

Local 372 represents approximately 2,600 Level-I School Crossing Guards ("SCGs"), 90% of which are women. SCGs often make the hourly minimum wage, earning approximately $20,000 per year. These workers are often the first line of defense to improve the safety for students who walk, bicycle, or take transit to school, and have maintained this key safety role throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. However, under current staffing levels, there still remains thousands of school children crossing main intersections without any supervision from NYPD school crossing guards, parental, or adult guidance. In order to place a SCG at every school post throughout the five boroughs, the City must hire an additional 100 full-time crossing guard supervisors, 200 part-time crossing guards, and implement a mobile replacement squad.

Additionally, SCGs do not get paid for snow days and certain holidays (days where the schools shut down but the City remains open), leaving their paychecks dependent on the whims of the weather. On top of the immediate, tangible concern over lost wages, this also represents an issue of equity for our members as, despite working under the New York Police Department, SCGs are

functionally analogous to the school support staff titles working under the Department of Education which are currently compensated for this lost time. Just as DOE school support staff are, so too should School Crossing Guards be equally compensated. Local 372 respectfully requests that, in addition to aforementioned hazard pay during the ongoing state of emergency, pay practices be permanently reformed such that SCGs share the same privileges and pay rights as Department of Education support staff titles.

Finally, SCGs are inherently at risk, not only from cars veering too close or from risk of exposure to COVID-19, but from physical attacks from people on the street. A number of SCGs have been the victims of on-duty assaults, which is a violent felony under current law. Local 372 requests City funding to support the promotion of a city-wide public awareness campaign to stop the violence against SCGs.

School Lunch Employees

On a normal school day, children need food in order to concentrate and learn in the classroom. And during these times of pandemic, many schoolchildren and members of the community continue to rely on schools for access to meals. Local 372 School Lunch Workers work hard each day – both in good times and as essential workers – to serve breakfasts and lunch, all which must fit into federal nutritional standards and guidelines. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, these workers have also served tens of millions of meals to students, their families, and members of the community in need.

This is demanding work; while current practices meet the Department of Education's Office of SchoolFood staffing standards, these current guidelines spread school lunch employees too thin between the "Breakfast in the Classroom" program and preparing for lunch. Local 372 is extremely supportive of the breakfast program, as well as universal lunch – every child deserves to come to class with a full stomach. However, inadequate staffing mandates by SchoolFood puts additional strain on workers, who are coming in earlier and staying later without extra compensation in order to simply make sure food is ready to feed all 1.2 million children when that bell rings. This strain could be alleviated by hiring more school lunch staff. Local 372 respectfully requests an additional 500 school lunch employees so we can reduce the strain on the current workforce while still continuing to fulfill the Mayor's breakfast and lunch initiatives, including implementing more cooking from scratch, and continuing to fill our student's stomachs.

Another struggle faced by our school lunch employees, which also has a direct impact on sanitation and hygiene in the school cafeterias and kitchens is inadequate air conditioning or ventilation.

Many of the kitchens Local 372 workers are in every day have little to no cooling or ventilation and these sweltering, stagnant environments can reach over 130 degrees! This is an inherently unsafe workplace, which is only exacerbated further when operating kitchens during New York City's intense summer heat waves. Such work conditions are unhealthy and inhumane, and have led to adverse and damaging health ailments, such as dehydration, heat stroke, and other heat-related health emergencies for many school lunch staff. Proper air conditioning would filter out heat, fumes, and airborne pestilence.

However, updating the non-existent and inadequate cooling and air exchange systems in public schools kitchens has been a persistent struggle faced by School Lunch Workers for decades. The vast majority of schools built from the 1930s through the 1990s lack the proper design and operation for acceptable indoor air circulation. Due to the age and condition of these buildings, many lack the necessary electrical capabilities to simply install cool units in kitchen spaces. The lack of cooling and air exchange is a systemic problem in cafeterias and kitchens throughout city schools that requires a comprehensive and systematic solution. Likewise, a serious capital investment is necessary to remedy these working conditions once and for all.

The DOE's Fiscal 2020-2024 Capital Plan allocates $276 million to the Mayor's "A/C for All initiative", a multi-year plan to bring air conditioning to all instructional (classroom) spaces. However, non-classroom spaces (such as cafeterias and kitchens) are not eligible to tap into this existing allocation to address the significant air exchange needs in these environments in public schools across the City. Likewise, Local 372 strongly supports the City Council's proposed inclusion of an additional $69 million in the FY 2022 City Budget towards the DOE's Capital Plan to fund the air conditioning and ventilation needs of non-classroom spaces. This funding would provide the foundation for the DOE and the School Construction Authority to implement a construction program, with a priority for cafeterias and kitchens.

SAPIS

Since 1971, SAPIS have provided essential social-emotional strategies and services to help youth remain learning-ready. The SAPIS program is an established, certified service that is sponsored by the NYS Office of Addiction Services and Supports ("OASAS") to provide Evidence-Based Program ("EBP") presentations, group and individual counseling, and positive alternatives to NYC public school students, servicing K-12 throughout all of New York City's 32 school districts, including special education. This includes classroom mandatory presentations and counseling for mental health services and crisis mitigation in the individual and group settings; and more.

Our students are facing a mental health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The proportion of children's mental health-related visits to Emergency Departments has skyrocketed since April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the virtualization of many aspects of students' lives. SAPIS counselors are already trained and ready to respond to this crisis. SAPIS have always been proactive in providing students and their families with the tools to navigate the myriad of societal, personal, and peer pressures that can derail healthy academic, social, and individual development. SAPIS counselors are also responsible for monitoring behavior, as well as offering resources and services to support students when they find themselves struggling to improve. Our programming is already tailored to address the long-term consequences of the pandemic and shutdown which are derailing healthy development.

Local 372 has long testified to this panel about the devastating effects of cuts to the SAPIS program and the loss of over 200 SAPIS counselors since 2006. Now more than ever, there are simply not enough SAPIS today to address the needs of all of our at-risk children and their families. To that end, the NYC Department of Education is not prioritizing our SAPIS assets or strengths to meet the increased demand for more Social-Emotional Learning curricula, turning instead to less effective and more costly alternatives. For example, Mayor de Blasio announced a "2021 Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan" to address this crisis that proposes the hiring of school social workers and community-based organizations to effectively duplicate the work with most expensive and less effective providers.

This is not acceptable in the current environment, and that is why New York City cannot afford to neglect this important work as the number of SAPIS positions continues to remain well below peak numbers. Even in the midst of a pandemic, it remains our shared responsibility to ensure our children meet and exceed their potential. Local 372's goal is to renew our partnership with the City and the State in making a smart investment in the quality of life for both New York students, their families, and communities at-large. That is why Local 372 requests that the New York City Council maintains its dollar-for-dollar match of the State Legislature's $2 million allocation towards SAPIS.

<u>Community Titles – Parent Coordinator Job Security</u>

Local 372's 1,600 Community Titles play a key role in not only keeping parents informed, but serve as a liaison between school administration and parents. They ensure that parents know how to navigate the school system and help develop leadership and family engagement with schools. Parent Coordinators ("PCs") assist parents with language barriers, handle HRA paperwork, work with city agencies to identify and provide services directly to parents, and handle numerous ancillary duties.

In addition to requesting an increase in the number of PCs and community associates to allow us to serve more students and balance the ratio between our workers and the hundred of children they each currently serve, we also respectfully request that the Council provide and implement job security and protections for PCs. Since 2003, these titled workers have no job protection and seniority rights. They are subject to the practice of being fired at will. Some PCs are performing out-of-title work rather than risk the possibility of receiving a disciplinary write-up or termination notice for questioning the appropriateness of their assignments.

Local 372 asks that the City provide job securities to PCs, including seniority recall of a laid-off employee to an active status, identical to that of other Community Titles as well as School Business Managers that are non-instructional school-based positions. PCs take their numerous responsibilities seriously; it is only fair that, as a matter of principle, their employment is protected and that they are not treated as at-will employees by principals, supervisors, and management.

Public Employee Homeless Crisis

We all know that many of our city's communities are struggling. Just as many of our students' parents are struggling to pay for housing, food, and life's daily needs, so too are our members. As the cost of living continues to rapidly increase, wages are not rising at a comparable rate. And for many New Yorkers living paycheck to paycheck, including School Crossing Guards, any one unanticipated day off from work can be the difference between making ends meet and financial ruin. Homelessness and "working homelessness" (where a regular paycheck is not enough to cover the cost of living), both in the general population and of those on the city payroll, have been a citywide crisis, a crisis that affects many of our members who are forced to live day-to-day, bouncing from shelter to shelter or couch to couch; all while coming to work every morning to serve our 1.2 million school children. No one who is employed, or who serves the community as our members do, should have to sleep in a shelter because they cannot afford rent.

To address the homeless crisis amongst our working members, Local 372 respectfully requests the City Council and the Mayor raise our members' wages (in addition to hazard pay for essential workers), so they can afford to stay in their homes and put food on the table, ensure all our members have adequate job and income protections, and hasten to find a solution to the lack of affordable housing in the city. Anyone working to provide a service to the city should have the right to make a living wage and afford to live in those city communities which they serve.

Job Security

Finally, regardless of whether our members work in a public school or a charter school, it is important that they be protected from shifts in funding. It has come to our attention that the Renaissance Charter School ("TRCS") is desperate for financial relief because the regular charter school funding process does not factor in the expenses of union workers stationed at the school. TRCS is a "model charter school" because the school has been able to produce high success rates even though they have sustained city and state cuts. To that end, TRCS adheres to our complete Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA), including a suite of benefits and pension payments.

Over the past few years, the City and the State have recognized the funding gap TRCS faces and have provided financial assistance. However, over the past two years, financial aid has tapered off and without any additional support, TRCS will have to make draconian spending cuts. Therefore, Local 372 supports any efforts on behalf of the City to ensure that TRCS remains solvent and that our members receive their collectively bargained benefits in a timely manner.

Conclusion

School support staff are critical to a functioning school system. They create the space every day where teachers can teach and students can learn. Local 372 workers who provide these services are essential to the public school system (as well as to the City as a whole during this state of emergency) and, as I have testified, are in need. Our workers come in every day, many work extra hours without pay or outside of their title, all to ensure that New York City's students are given the opportunity to succeed that every child deserves.

In closing, Local 372 extends its gratitude to the City Council for your support for our titles. We recognize that there are not enough resources to address every worthy issue and service throughout the city, and that tough decisions must be made over how to allocate limited funds. However, the City's children are our lives' work, and in order for this important work to succeed, we need a healthy working space and hazard pay for essential workers, more support to increase staffing, a living wage for our members, and to shelter those who provide critical services to the city yet cannot afford to shelter themselves.

On behalf of the 24,000 members of Local 372, NYC Board of Education, District Council 37 | AFSCME, I thank you for this opportunity to testify. We will answer any questions you may have.

**Testimony of Dilcy Benn, President of Local 1505, DC 37**
**FY 2022 Executive Budget**
**May 25, 2021**

Good morning Chairpersons Dromm, Rosenthal, and fellow City Councilmembers. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify. My name is Dilcy Benn and I am the President of Local 1505 of DC 37 representing close to one thousand City Parks Workers (also referred to as CPWs) primarily in the NYC Parks and Recreation Department. My members work in all five boroughs conducting maintenance in all City Parks.

Once again, I want to thank the Speaker, City Council, and the Mayor for baselining the 100 CPWs in FY 20 we fought for many years. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, **the Parks Department was reduced by $84 million** in FY 21. It was the second largest agency cut in the city budget. This came at a time when attendance at parks was unprecedented.

This year, with the help of federal funding, the Parks Department announced they are in the process of hiring the full amount of seasonal staff, maintenance, cleaners, as well as adding 2500 City Cleanup Corps members to work in parks. While this is good news, the Executive Budget does not address the restoration of $10 million for the additional 100 CPWs and 50 Gardeners in the Parks Department's budget that was added in FY 20 but not baselined.

As the city starts to re-open and with the Mayor's announcement of all the openings of beaches and pools for the summer season, these workers are needed more than ever.

We saw what happened last year when there wasn't enough staff to care for and maintain parks, pools, and beaches. These areas were dirtier and garbage continued to accumulate. Despite Councilmembers organizing clean-ups in their areas with volunteers, but there is nothing like dedicated parks workers. Furthermore, due to the shortage of workers, many park bathrooms were closed since there was not enough staff to clean and stock the bathrooms. These workers know their parks and enjoy their work daily.

We are grateful for the City Council's continued support to parks workers and stand with them to restore these essential workers!

Before I conclude my testimony, I want to thank our partners in the Play Fair Now coalition on behalf of my members for standing with us and advocating for them.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today and look forward to working with you to restore and baseline the funding to the Parks Department. I will be happy to take any questions you may have.

Testimony
New York City Council Finance Hearing
FISCAL YEAR 2022 EXECUTIVE BUDGET
March 25, 2021
By Jim Hamlin-McLeod, Local 1549

This testimony is on behalf of Local 1549 President Eddie Rodriguez and the 14,000 members and taxpayers of New York City Clerical-Administrative Employees Local 1549. Our members are front line workers in nearly every city agency, 311, New York Police Department (NYPD) and New York Health and Hospitals (NYC H+H) and Metro Plus HMO. Our members are primarily women of color who live, work, shop, and vote in every community in this city.

The Local 1549 Executive Board, its 14,000 members and I are asking once again for the Council's Finance Committee to take a leadership role, cost efficient, responsible action to save this city. We have been asking too long for the city to monitor the Agency spending and hiring of its civilian employees in HRA (Eligibility Specialists), hospitals (stopping the exploitative contracting out our jobs), 311, and NYPD.

The Uniform agencies like NYPD, Correction, and Sanitation have been asking for more money for additional personnel. But they still have uniform personnel doing administrative work Local 1549 latest figures factoring in our collective bargaining raises but NOT those of uniformed personnel in the NYPD alone show a conservative saving of: Roughly $30 million recurring yearly. We have asked for an audit of these agencies' personnel and their assignment. This would save the Agency, City and tax payers millions of dollars each year. The cost of Uniform member is 2 to 3 times as clerical worker such as a Police Administrative Aide or Clerical Associate. The saving could be allocated to other city projects, like housing, homelessness, childcare and the environment.

With more than half of the city council seats are up for grabs, a mayoral election, and Borough President position. Change is coming. But todays committed Council members can start to move in the right direction. The coronavirus pandemic hit the city hard. It put us in a huge deficit. Thanks to President Biden and Congress passing the recovery act bill. Helping states, cities, and families across the country. Since the city has received this stimulus funding it is a perfect time to invest in the savings that would begin to accrue immediately.

It is time to help our diverse population in need by hiring professional civil service Interpreters instead of the Council's proposals in the latest response to the city administration proposed budget for increased privatization of the interpreter function.

## Saving and Generating Tax Dollars = Hiring of needed employees.

311 call volume has gone up in the last couple of years, mainly during the pandemic. They need more Call Center Representative. The Agency had to spend money for outside help last year just to keep up with the call volume. The Local asked the committee to fund the Agency to hire more CCR to stop unnecessary outsource spending. This local and I are asking for the City to put money into budget for interpreters. The Agencies are wasting more money for outside parties to do its interpreting. The city has a civil service title to do interpreting. These titles are not high paying jobs and promotes growth for those who need income.

# Premium Pay

When the city was in its crises. Just as in previous times. Essential personnel like Police Communication Technician (911), Call Center Representative (311), Eligibility Specialist and HHC workers were on the front line servicing the city.

The federal stimulus bill passed in congress provides for "premium pay" to public employee service workers defined as, "needed to maintain continuity of operations of essential infrastructure sectors" or others who are critical to "protect the health and wellbeing" of residents. The funds earmarked for payment must be used for the reason they were legislated for. That is direct payment to essential workers

**ASK**

We ask the City Council to make sure pay for essential workers is done fairly. We ask that you support and see that the NYPD, Corrections, Sanitation Civilianize its administrative functions and place employees in the jobs they were hired and paid to do according to their job descriptions; hiring of Eligibility Specialists in HRA; hiring CCRs needed to meet the increase in demand in 311; stop wasting tax dollars to replace civil service clerical employees with non-competitive employees who perform the same job duties; use the city's civil service Interpreter title to enhance language servicing for our diverse populations.

All these requests will create the badly needed jobs by our local population and enhance city services.

**Executive Budget Hearing Fiscal Year 2022**
**Committee on Finance New York City Council**
**Joint Testimony of**
**Brooklyn Public Library Guild, Local 1482**
**New York Public Library Guild, Local 1930**
**New York Public Library Quasi-Public Employees, Local 374**
**Queens Public Library Guild, Local 1321**
**May 24, 2021**

Chairman Daniel Dromm and fellow committee members, my name is Valentin Colon, President of the New York Public Library Guild, Local 1930. I want to thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify on behalf of all the patrons and employees of Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, and Queens Public Library. The four unions representing union workers at the three library systems, once again, join our collective forces to come together to testify on the importance of an open library that is clean, secure, and fully staffed.

We are here to say “Thank You” to each and every City Council member who has taken steps to protect and fight for library funding. You have been the guiding light for our communities that want and need us. It is your vision that has seen us through many rough and rocky waters.

During this terrible time of the pandemic, our members demonstrated their resiliency to face the challenges that befell us, and to not only create, but enhance in-person and remote library services for ALL. Our members, the frontline workers that our communities come in contact with, day in and day out, find themselves struggling to maintain library services as more and more of their fellow workers leave the systems. And with the Mayor’s proposed budget cuts, the remaining staff will need to reassess what can actually be done and what needs to be shelved.

Right now, the three library systems do not have enough staff to open six days a week. During the pandemic many public service staff - librarians, clerks and custodians either retired, found other work, or left for other reasons. The three Libraries have graciously turned over several branches to the City so that we can play our part in fighting this pandemic. We do not know what the impact of this pandemic will have on the future of libraries and the services we provide. Some things will be the same and some will be different. However, when we open all 213 branches, Adult Learning, and Tech centers for our new normal operation, our customers will expect to have their libraries and in-person services open six days per week.

At NYPL, when the pandemic subsides and we return to fuller service with increased hours, programs, events, and library services, this will be at the expense of the staff. Over the last couple budget battles Local 1930 has continued to lose members. Local 1930 has lost over 50 positions, as well as never getting the additional 100 new positions that were promised by the NYPL Leadership. While the Library will show you that our circulation and programming numbers are up, this has all happened at the expense of staff not being able to take a real vacation. Local 1930 members, for many years now have had to cancel and/or just not take vacation due to staffing shortages. These shortages have at times also affected branch operations which required branches being closed. Alternatively, NYPL offers overtime.

Security at our neighborhood branches has always been a major issue for all stakeholders and given the current environment that we unfortunately find ourselves in, security is of even greater importance. I was recently informed that all of the Staten Island branch's security guards will be removed when we reopen for full service. And at other locations it has, at times, been inadequate and that will continue.

The concerns expressed at NYPL are the concerns shared by Queens and Brooklyn union members. Lack of staff, security, schedules changed, juggling too many programs and services are affecting each and every library employee.

I recently celebrated forty years of service with NYPL and twelve years as the President of Local 1930, and can speak to the decline in staffing and the impact that these shortages have created. The Mayor's proposed cut will devastate library services and harm our communities, especially now when our neighbors need us to bridge the digital, educational, social divide enhanced and made stark by the pandemic. These proposed budget cuts will continue to have a lasting impact on our neighborhood libraries and the communities that call their library their second home.

This may be the last time that I will have the privilege of testifying before this distinguished Committee and It is my sincere hope that your voice will once again resonate as our champions. That your wisdom will prevail and that your will; will once again see the three libraries through yet another funding crisis.

**Testimony of Olivia Duong**
**President, Local 3778, DC 37**
**FY 2022 Executive Budget**
**May 25, 2021**

Good morning Chairman Dromm and fellow Councilmembers. My name is Olivia Duong and I am President of Local 3778 of DC 37 representing NYPD titles such as Criminalists, City Research Scientists, Architects, and Engineers. I am here on behalf of the 300 civilian members of Local 3778 to highlight the hard work of civilians and to voice our support to further civilianize the Police Department.

## WORK WE DO

I want to bring attention to the Criminalists who work at the NYPD Police Laboratory. Criminalists are forensic scientists who analyze different types of evidence involved in an alleged crime such as controlled substances, latent fingerprints, firearms, gunshot residue, hairs and fibers, etc. Our job is to remain objective, impartial, unbiased while conducting analysis using scientific testing methods and complex instrumentation. The evidence that we test can be a ziplock bag of powder containing mixed heroin and fentanyl, a bloody shirt with gunpowder residue, fingerprints left on the hood of a car, plastic bags and sheets which contained a deceased victim's body, or bullet casings left at the scene of a homicide. Criminalists testify in court as expert witnesses to the results of our analyses. Our testimony educates juries to make informed and fair verdicts. It doesn't matter who calls us to testify, whether it be the prosecution or defense, we testify based on the results. Our work affects people's lives and our laboratory maintains the highest quality work by following stringent national standards for forensic science laboratories. This allows the public to have confidence and trust in our results, which is a responsibility that we treat with the utmost reverence and humility. Throughout the pandemic, criminalists were deemed essential workers for our critical role in public safety and we answered the call.

## FUNDING

With the scrutiny of the NYPD's budget, what our members have experienced is that the civilian units are the first areas in which the budget is cut. As shooting increased dramatically in the last year, uniformed firearms examiners were paid overtime to assist in tackling the backlog while civilian Criminalists working in the same position were not permitted to do so, despite working side by side and sharing the same duties. Although overtime is now allowed I would be remiss to point out this as one example of many unequal uses of finances. We are in

agreement with the Finance Committee members that more oversight is needed in exactly where and how money is spent within the department.

## CIVILIANIZATION

Our union agrees with the public that we need more uniformed members taking an active role working with communities for safety. Civilians can play a larger part in support roles for policing. I would like to point out a few examples of some areas where there could be cost savings in the NYPD:

- The Firearms Analysis Section of the lab - which is currently a hybrid uniformed/civilian section. It is typical for many detectives to leave the lab when they are called in for detail, which leaves the laboratory short-staffed for our own essential work. Having more civilians in this unit would be an added advantage to the city without compromising the quality of work.

- Another area worth looking into for further civilianization is the Evidence Control Section at the Police Laboratory which is responsible for 24/7 intake, security, and storage of forensic evidence. This section is traditionally staffed by 100% uniformed members. Due to recent massive retirements by Police Officers, Criminalists stepped up to the plate and filled in those positions for over half a year. It is evident that these roles do not require someone with extensive police training and can be filled by civilians.

- In addition, there are many sections within the PD that carry out solely administrative duties and the majority of those units are supervised by uniformed members. We have civilian City Research Scientists working alongside Sergeants and Lieutenants in strategic research units that analyze and evaluate Department policies, programs, and resources. The Scientists have advanced degrees in physical and social sciences but are supervised and evaluated by uniformed members. We also believe that having civilians in higher positions in the PD will help lead to meaningful changes to police policies that reflect what the civilian public wants to see.

There are more areas where we can further civilianize the NYPD and the union applauds the City Council for pushing the initiative.

The NYPD needs funding so that we can protect and serve our communities which includes the amazing work of my members and other civilian workforces. I do not believe that the public wants a reduction in forensic science or oversight of the NYPD. We understand the city will be facing some difficult economic times in the years ahead, but the budget should not be balanced on the backs of the civilian workforce.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. Please contact me at local3778@gmail.com or call 917-283-1152 should you have any questions or comments.

In Solidarity,

Olivia Duong
President Local 3778, DC37
NYPD Technical Professional Employees

Legal Services NYC
DEMAND JUSTICE

**Legal Services NYC**
**Written Testimony Submission for Executive Budget Hearing, City Council Finance Committee**
**May 25, 2021**

Legal Services NYC's ("LSNYC") (https://www.legalservicesnyc.org/about-us) mission is to fight poverty and seek racial, social, and economic justice for low-income New York City residents. Through litigation, advocacy, education and outreach, LSNYC has advanced the interests of our clients and created systemic changes that strengthen and protect low-income communities. We work to protect the rights of veterans, immigrants, the LGBTIQA+ community, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable constituents. We are deeply appreciative to the City Council for its many years of support for legal services, and for its championship of our mission and our work.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the racial and socio-economic inequities that exist in our education system. Since schools initially closed in March 2020, our focus has been on ensuring our clients, all of whom are students in grades K-12, are connected to remote learning and to their special education services. Students without computers or internet access have not had continuous access to education. Reports suggest that lack of technological devices, inconsistent internet access, and the absence of live instruction from teachers, have set back students academically during Covid-19 an average of five to nine months[1]. Learning loss could have been prevented had the New York City Department of Education ("NYCDOE") provided these crucial elements of remote learning.

The pandemic has hit students in vulnerable populations hard. These students include those with disabilities who cannot meaningfully benefit from remote learning; those in families where English is not their first language; and those in homes with limited technological and academic support skills.

The technology gap has had an outsized impact on students with disabilities, who have long been inadequately served by the NYCDOE. The lack of technology has deprived them of mandated special education services, hindering their ability to learn. They have struggled to access services that cannot be adequately delivered through phone or video, like occupational and physical therapy. They were denied deeply needed new services, and had their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) unjustifiably modified by school staff.

[1] Emma Dorn et al. *COVID-19 and learning loss-disparities grow and students need help,* Mckinsey& Company, Dec. 8, 2020, https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-learning-loss-disparities-grow-and-students-need-help#

In one instance, a student with Down Syndrome had to wait over five months to get his remote learning device fixed when it stopped working a short time after initially receiving it.

Students in families where English is not the first language are experiencing academic setbacks due to NYCDOE's inadequate interpretation and translation services for limited English proficient (LEP) parents. In October 2020, during a City Council hearing on the re-opening of schools, the New York Immigration Coalition reported that English Language Learners ("ELLs") and immigrant families, as a whole, are "entering the 2020–21 [school] year having experienced an outsized academic 'slide,' especially those who could not access distance learning this Spring and who have limited resources at home."[2] With 42% of NYC public school students, roughly 396,000 students, speaking a language other than English at home, the impact of limited language access in schools, and its disparate impact on ELLs and immigrant communities, was magnified. The 2020–2021 school year in NYC began with a high percentage of parents opting to continue remote learning for their children.[3] Even those parents who chose hybrid learning struggled to communicate with their children's schools. It has been particularly difficult for ELL and immigrant parents to keep up with the demands of remote learning and the rapidly occurring changes in their children's class schedules as a result of COVID-19

Students of parents who did not already have the technology and digital literacy to access the online platforms necessary for remote instruction have struggled to communicate with teachers, mental health counselors, and school administrators. The systems these students interact with have been overwhelmed, and ill-equipped to meet them with the understanding, empathy, and flexibility necessary to accommodate students severely impacted by the effects of the pandemic. These families continue to have significant barriers in assisting their children with both access to remote learning and to understanding the academic content.

Throughout the last year and a half, students have also been severely impacted by the trauma of COVID-19 and recent publicized instances of systemic racism and violence. While we are happy to hear about the recent expansion of mental health support for students, schools must do more to address trauma, stop overly punitive disciplinary measures, including the disproportionate suspensions of students of color, and implement a healing-centered approach to education throughout the entire school system.

Though the NYCDOE has made steps towards reducing suspensions and the school-to-prison pipeline, our clients are still subject to traumatic interactions with police while in school. In one recent incident, NYCDOE officials directed NYPD officers to handcuff and transport our client, a 14-year-old middle school student, to the local precinct. No imminent threat of bodily injury existed when the student was arrested. The incident was

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[2] Reopening NYC Public Schools – Health and Safety: Hearing Before the N.Y.C. Council, Comm. on Educ. Jointly with the Comm. on Health, 2020 Leg. 279 (Oct. 16, 2020) (statement of Andrea Ortiz, New York Immigr. Coal.)

[3] Eliza Shapiro, *N.Y.C. Parents are Exhausted. But will They Send Their Children to School?*, N.Y. Times, Sept. 4, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/04/nyregion/nyc-schools-reopening.html

seemingly an attempt by the NYPD and NYCDOE to frighten the student, who had been accused of misbehavior (for which he was not disciplined) during the prior week. Sadly, punitive discipline against Black students is all too common in NYC schools as Black students were suspended at twice the rate of their classmates in the 2019-2020 school year.[4]

Trauma can have far- reaching impacts on the cognitive and behavioral development of children All too often students who have been exposed to trauma or adverse childhood experiences ("ACEs") engage in behaviors that educators interpret as defiance or aggression. A growing body of research has concluded that punitive responses to students coping with trauma exacerbates those behaviors. School staff need to respond with supports to allow those students to better cope with the stressful experiences in their lives and to better self-regulate. Over the last two years, LSNYC has led the advocacy for more appropriate responses to students impacted by trauma and ACEs. In 2018, our Bronx staff helped form the Healing Centered Schools Working Group to further the efforts to bring trauma responsive and healing-centered practices to NYC schools. The need to bring healing-centered educational practices to NYC schools has become even more urgent since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In June 2020, the Healing Center Schools Working Group released the Community Roadmap to Bring Healing-Centered Schools to the Bronx[5], a step-by-step plan that describes how the NYCDOE can create healing-centered schools. The NYCDOE, recognizing the importance of addressing trauma and the need for healing practices in schools as schools re-open, has promoted the Working Group's Roadmap as a resource for the reopening of schools.[6] Based on our recommendation, the NYCDOE also partnered with the University of Chicago's TREP Project[7] to provide training on trauma-responsive educational practices to all NYCDOE staff.

Throughout the pandemic, LSNYC has continued to advocate and protect students' access to their education. LSNYC represented families over the last year at IEP meetings, administrative hearings, and mediations, to protect their academic rights. We helped families obtain devices and connect to the internet. We have secured special education supports and services necessary for our clients with disabilities to receive a free and appropriate public education and have successfully secured compensatory education services for clients to make up for special education instruction and services the Department of Education failed to provide during the pandemic.

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[4] Annual Report 2019-2020 on Student Discipline, New York City Department of Education, https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/government-reports/suspension-reports

[5] Bronx Healing Centered Schools Working Group, *Community Roadmap to Bring Healing-Centered Schools to the Bronx*, available at https://www.legalservicesnyc.org/what-we-do/practice-areas-and-projects/access-to-education/community-roadmap-to-healing-centered-schools

[6] *New York City Department of Education Bridge to School: Strengthening Community and Fostering Resiliency*, https://www.schools.nyc.gov/docs/default-source/default-document-library/bridge-to-school-plan-08272020

[7] Reema Amin, *NYC rolled out a trauma-informed curriculum. Educators worry they have little time to learn it before schools reopen.*, Chalkbeat New York , Aug. 26, 2020, https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/8/26/21403188/nyc-trauma-informed-curriculum-teacher-training-pandemic

Our recommendations on the NYC budget center around the vulnerable communities we serve and are rooted in equity.

Recommendations:

1) **Expand assistance to students with disabilities and students who have fallen behind grade level to receive compensatory educational services.** Many low-income students were academically delayed prior to the pandemic and the transition to remote learning. As the new school year approaches, we must ensure that students harmed by lost educational opportunities receive the services they need to make academic progress. Tutoring supports and other services are desperately needed for these students who lost out on their education during the pandemic and are now further behind.

2) **Expand assistance to students who have experienced trauma and will need social/emotional support.** Countless students and their families have experienced food insecurity, loss of income, isolation, sickness, increased racial hostility, and death during the pandemic. Students impacted by the trauma of COVID-19 and those experiencing emotional vulnerabilities will need increased resources, services and programs to address their social emotional and developmental needs. Additionally, investments in mental health services are necessary to meet the higher-level needs of those students more severely impacted by both the pandemic and the long history of poverty and racism. Investments in the Mental Health Continuum as recommended by the Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate, and in clinically-trained mental health staff in schools will ensure that all students who need direct mental health services have access to timely, high-quality services in school and in the community. LSNYC has a long history of fighting to protect vulnerable students in federal and state courts, administrative proceedings and through community-based and citywide partnerships. LSNYC has a lawsuit pending in federal court on supporting and protecting the rights of student victims who have experienced sexual harassment and assault. We want to be sure every student can attend school with the supports they need, and that the schools educate their students to prevent such issues from occurring. There needs to be an investment in a whole school approach that is centered on healing. As noted above, LSNYC has worked with the NYCDOE over the last year to bring **the Healing-Centered Schools** approach to NYC public schools. We want to expand this advocacy for the many students coming back to schools after suffering trauma in the past year due to the pandemic and its many stressors.

3) **Expand assistance to students and parents who do not speak English as their first language.** English Language Learner (ELL) students have struggled to learn online, while their Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents have faced numerous obstacles navigating the school landscape, both online and in person. LSNYC has a lawsuit pending in Federal court regarding the NYCDOE's failure to provide mandated interpretation and translation to LEP parents. Ensuring adequate resources for ELL students and their families is particularly important now as they face these ongoing challenges with remote and blended learning.

4) **Expand assistance to students and resources for schools to prevent the overcriminalization and adultification of children and reduce overly punitive action, including suspension and other exclusionary discipline for infractions or other offenses**. We will continue to engage with the NYCDOE to ensure that school officials avoid using harsh punitive responses, including police and emergency services, that research shows are not effective in changing behavior. We currently represent a student inappropriately handcuffed in school prior to the pandemic. We want to end such practices through legal representation and supporting policies that will usher in changes that will dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline which disproportionately affects Black students and students with disabilities in NYC. LSNYC has filed federal lawsuits against the NYCDOE and charter schools challenging the inappropriate suspension and treatment of disabled students in emotional crisis and will continue to do that work.

5) **Expand resources to end the technological divide.** Even when students are back in the classroom this inequality cannot continue. Statistics show that lack of devices and Wi-Fi have led to unequal academic achievement for low-income students even prior to the pandemic. Many low-income families cannot afford high quality Wi-Fi and need education and assistance to become more computer literate. This is even more important as the NYCDOE has signaled that remote learning will continue on snow days.

LSNYC is working hard to address the issues raised above, and ask that you provide $500,000 to support our Access to Education Project, which will deliver legal services designed to help children catch up and keep up with their educations so that they are not further hurt by this pandemic. These services will help kids with special needs and disabilities, will provide language access advocacy for ELL students and their limited English proficient parents, and will work with the schools to implement restorative healing programs so that children, including those who have been traumatized by sexual harassment or violence in the schools, can be responded to with measures that are supportive and not punitive.

Respectfully submitted,

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**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL FISCAL YEAR 2022**
**EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARINGS**

**May 25, 2021**

My name is Raun Rasmussen and I am the Executive Director of Legal Services NYC. Our staff of more than 600 advocates and support staff fights poverty and seeks racial, social and economic justice for low-income New Yorkers by providing free civil legal services to more than 110,000 New Yorkers every year. Our services help your constituents, our neighbors and fellow New Yorkers, to meet their most basic needs for shelter, safety, income security, and access to high-quality education and health care. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of our partnership with the City Council to secure justice for low-income New Yorkers, and to explain why renewed funding civil legal services is so critical.

This pandemic has stripped New York City families and children of their jobs, their incomes, their education, their health, and in all too many cases, their lives: more than 795,000 cases, 25,000 deaths, and an unemployment rate that skyrocketed to 20% last summer. Before the pandemic, nearly 1.7M New Yorkers had incomes under the federal poverty level—a mere $26,000 for a family of four. That reality is now much worse, for those families, and for so many more who've been impoverished by recent unemployment.

Most tragically, this crisis has highlighted the compounding impacts that systemic racism and endemic poverty have on the communities we serve: financial impacts, health impacts, and education impacts have all fallen disproportionately, and devastatingly, on communities of

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**William T. Russell Jr.**, Board Chair

color. To add insult to injury, many of our clients have been unable to access or use technologies that would enable them to apply for public benefits or access their remote-learning classes. Many cannot afford Internet or a computer and, at best, rely on a phone with limited minutes and bad connectivity.

Since mid-March when we closed the doors to our 16 offices throughout the City, our staff have worked tirelessly to help our clients get and keep the benefits and services they desperately need to meet their most basic needs: food; health care; cash assistance; safety; and shelter that is safe and affordable.

Our staff are educating thousands of New Yorkers about unemployment benefits and how to apply for them. We're helping kids with special needs get the educational services they need so they don't fall further behind. Our immigration advocates are making sure our clients don't get deported or lose their rights to legal status. Our housing and foreclosure advocates are fighting illegal evictions and predatory lending scams. And our family law advocates are helping survivors of domestic violence who can't find privacy from their batterer to make the calls needed to find safety.

Your funding for Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers, for our Veterans Justice Project, for the Low Wage Worker Initiative, and, we hope, for our new Access to Education Project, is critical to our ability to continue to provide these services.

The Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers program is most critical because it supports the broad range of services that we can provide through. In FY21, with the pandemic raging, the impact on the state and local economy potentially devastating, and no end in sight, we fully understood the need to cut back on our funding, as you had to do for so many others.

But with significant federal funding in the process of arriving, we ask that you reverse that cut and restore funding for the Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers program to the FY 2020 level of $5.3 million.

We also ask that you restore funding for Legal Services NYC's Veterans Justice Project to $150,000, a return to FY 2020 levels. Our city-wide Veterans Justice Project has provided civil legal services to thousands of veterans, service members and their families since we began the Project in November 2011.

For the past four years the City Council and the Executive have provided $2.5M in funding for the Low Wage Worker Initiative (LWWI), through which LSNYC and other legal services and community-based organizations have provided essential litigation and advocacy services to help low-wage workers fight employment discrimination, get the legal wages they are due, and qualify for life-saving unemployment services. In FY22, an increase of LWWI funding to $4 million for legal services and $1 million for outreach services Citywide would allow LSNYC and other advocates to significantly expand our services to fight workplace abuses and secure crucial benefits and protections for vulnerable workers throughout the City.

Finally, one of the most devastating impacts of the pandemic, because it is potentially life-altering in the long term, is the way New York City's children's educations have been adversely affected. We are working hard to address these issues, and ask that you provide $500,000 to support our Access to Education Project, which will deliver legal services designed to help children catch up and keep up with their educations so that they left struggling by this pandemic. These services will help kids with special needs and disabilities, will provide language access advocacy for English language learner students and their limited English proficient

parents, and will work with the schools to implement restorative healing programs so that children who have been traumatized by sexual harassment or violence in the schools can be responded to with measures that are supportive and not punitive.

For more than two decades the City Council has provided a lifeline to low income New Yorkers by funding civil legal services that help people get and keep the benefits and services they need to live life with a modicum of decency. We have always worked in partnership with the Council to help those with the greatest needs in this great City and look forward to our continued work together.

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Legal Services NYC
DEMAND JUSTICE

**Testimony Re: Low-Wage Worker Initiative Funding**
**Executive Budget Hearing**
**Tuesday, May 25, 2021**

Members of the New York City Council:

I direct the Workers' Rights and Benefits Unit at Brooklyn Legal Services, part of Legal Services NYC (LSNYC). LSNYC is the largest civil legal services provider in the country, serving over 110,000 individuals annually, and is dedicated to fighting poverty and seeking justice for low-income New Yorkers. LSNYC submits this testimony to urge you to renew and increase funding for the Low-Wage Worker Initiative (LWWI) and the Low-Wage Worker Support Program, which together support legal services, outreach and organizing for low-wage workers. This funding is part of the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI).

The City Council and the Administration first provided this dedicated funding to support legal services for low-wage workers in FY 2019. In that year, as well as subsequent years when the funding was restored, the Administration has allocated $2 million for this effort and the Council has allocated an additional $500,000 for low-wage worker support and outreach. Last year, LSNYC received approximately $410,000 of the Administration's funding. LSNYC has been able to leverage LWWI support to hire new staff and allocate the time of several attorneys and paralegal advocates to focus on low-wage workers. This funding has enabled LSNYC to substantially expand the work that we do on behalf of low-wage workers. Over the past year, it has allowed us to redirect staffing resources to respond to the vastly increased need for employment and unemployment assistance during the pandemic. Expanding this funding to $4 million for citywide legal services and $1 million for support services would greatly enhance our ability to reach and advocate for low-wage workers throughout the City.

Low-wage workers, the majority of whom are immigrants, include many frontline workers performing essential work, and experience disproportionate rates of wage theft, discrimination, harassment, safety violations, trafficking, and other forms of workplace mistreatment, notably in the restaurant and service industries. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these problems and created a host of new legal issues which continue to expand as New York City begins to reopen. The Low-Wage Worker Initiative is the **only** dedicated city funding for this crucial work, yet the future of this funding remains uncertain.

The City continues to experience historically high unemployment rates due to the pandemic. In March 2021, New York City's official unemployment rate was 11.7%,

substantially higher than the national rate. The unemployment rate is even higher for workers of color: over 16% of Black adults and over 13% of Latinx adults in the City were unemployed in March. Workers continue to struggle to access unemployment benefits, experiencing significant delays and barriers at the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL). Additionally, many New Yorkers are now facing overpayment charges from NYSDOL, stemming from hastily implemented new benefit programs during the pandemic. Workers continue to face issues arising due to COVID-19, including obtaining reasonable accommodations and enforcing their rights to sick leave, job protections, and appropriate safety precautions in the workplace, particularly now that more employers are returning to in-person operations.

What follows are the stories of a few of the New Yorkers we have been able to represent as well as some examples of what LSNYC has been able to accomplish thanks to the LWWI funding. Without this dedicated funding from the City, these low-wage workers and many, many more like them would go without representation and would be significantly less likely to successfully recover stolen wages, address discrimination, fight retaliation, and obtain vital unemployment insurance (UI) benefits to support their families.

- Bianca P. worked as a building super for almost six years and was never paid for a single hour of work. Her only "compensation" was being permitted to store the cans and bottles she collected for income at the building where she worked. After she had worked there for five years, the landlord asked Ms. P if she wanted to move into a basement apartment in the building, and she accepted. Two months later, the landlord started an eviction proceeding against her claiming she was a squatter. LSNYC sued the landlord/employer in federal court for violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act and New York Labor Law and negotiated a $120,000 settlement, plus a waiver of any use and occupancy owed to the landlord.

- Another LSNYC client was fired from her job as a bartender. We overcame her employer's false claims that she had both quit and been fired for cause, enabling her to collect UI benefits. We also pursued a wage theft claim, obtaining nearly $1,600 for our client. We further assisted her in a claim based on the retaliatory nature of her firing, and ultimately obtained $10,000 for her from the employer.

- Jose T had become homeless after his employer, a large religious educational institution, fired him for complaining once too often about his substandard pay. We prevailed in a UI hearing, enabling him to collect benefits. We then filed a federal lawsuit challenging the employer's failure to pay minimum wage and overtime. We settled the case in 2020, obtaining $35,500 for our client.

- We represented an elderly home health aide who lost her employment when she became ill with COVID-19. She was granted UI, but later assessed with a $25,000 overpayment and penalties because she was accused of quitting without good cause and not being available for work. Through informal administrative advocacy, we

succeeded in getting the overpayment reversed and securing both retroactive and ongoing Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits.

In view of the sudden, massive unemployment crisis created when the pandemic hit New York City last year, UI advocacy continues to be a major focus of our work, including community education and policy advocacy as well as individual cases. In the year following the shutdown beginning in mid-March 2020, calls to LSNYC's intake line for unemployment assistance more than doubled. We quickly shifted staffing and priorities to address this burgeoning need. On average, LSNYC has been able to achieve $14,000 in benefits for our UI clients. We are confronting systemic issues and have joined with our coalition colleagues to address such problems as reasonable assurance for New York City Department of Education employees during summer 2020; retroactive changes to PUA eligibility that NYSDOL is not always applying consistently and correctly; and overpayment notices related to the $600 advance that NYSDOL paid out to claimants in the first few weeks of pandemic closure.

In collaboration with the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, LSNYC is also litigating against the NYSDOL on behalf of for-hire vehicle (FHV) drivers whose UI applications were delayed for months. As soon as New York City shut down in March 2020, drivers for Uber, Lyft, and similar app-based FHV companies lost almost all of their work and applied for UI benefits. Because these drivers were misclassified as independent contractors by their employers, they faced extensive delays in receiving UI benefits, were improperly denied full benefits and were instead steered to the federal PUA program, resulting in much lower benefit rates. Most drivers were entitled to as much as $504 weekly in New York UI benefits, but were receiving only $182 under PUA. These delays and inadequate benefits were devastating to drivers and their families, the overwhelming majority of whom are immigrants. In a victory impacting more than 68,000 app-based drivers across the state, we were granted a preliminary injunction ordering the NYSDOL to immediately pay app-based drivers the full amount owed to them and to notify all claimants of their right to request a review of their benefit rates. We believe that more than 47,000 New York City drivers have benefited from the decision; based on a very conservative estimate, that translates to upwards of $30 million in crucial benefits for New York City residents each month.

In the past year, New York City experienced a devastating economic crisis that disproportionately affected low-wage workers and workers of color. Now, as the recovery process is beginning to take shape, legal services for low-wage workers continues to be critically important. Renewal of LWWI funding would ensure LSNYC's ability to maintain our current extremely limited staffing in each borough for employment and UI issues. An increase of LWWI funding to $4 million for legal services and $1 million for outreach services Citywide would allow LSNYC and other advocates to significantly expand our staffing and services to fight workplace abuses and secure crucial benefits and protections for vulnerable workers throughout the City.

We thank the City Council for holding this hearing and for supporting the rights of low-wage workers.

Respectfully submitted,

*/s/ Sarah E. Dranoff*
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Lucy Sexton

New Yorkers for Culture & Arts

City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs final hearing on budget May 25, 2021

Thank you Chair Dromm and members of the City Council. My name is Lucy Sexton and I am with the cultural advocacy coalition New Yorkers for Culture & Arts.

As we have made our way through this extraordinary and devastating year, I have testified at six different Council Hearings. Culture is the hardest hit sector in our city---with the most fragile parts of the sector having the hardest time and I have again and again said at hearings: We cannot emerge from this crisis with a more centralized and more white cultural ecosystem. Now the time has arrived when we can take action to ensure the city that comes back is led by arts and culture supported in every community, helping every neighborhood and our great city as a whole recover economically and emotionally.

While federal programs have helped some of the sector survive, I am here to tell you that our city's cultural sector is hanging by a thread. And the organizations most at risk are the ones most dependent on public funding: organizations disproportionately led by and serving BIPOC communities

The Cultural Plan for Recovery lays the groundwork for building a new city, and provides a roadmap for the economic recovery that you have heard every elected official acknowledge arts and culture must lead. It provides direct relief to the most hurt parts of our sector----to communities hardest hit by COVID where families are in dire need of the healing that arts can bring; and to the performing arts which will need immediate relief as we ramp up over the next year. It calls for a Cultural Equity Fund, centering organizations of color and beginning to build a more equitable, more stable, and more anti-racist arts and culture ecosystem.

CPR asks the City Council for $30M for the DCLA, supporting both CIGs and program groups to get us back to where we were pre-COVID. It asks you to restore the invaluable initiatives, And

asks that at long last we baseline support for the Coalition of Theaters of Color.

I ask that you also support the workers in our industry---artists and cultural workers who have suffered terribly and who should also be central to building a new cultural ecosystem and a new city. The Mayor's remarkable investiment in the Artists Corps must be extended, along with the creation of an Artists Registry, to support a robust and diverse cultural workforce.

The details of the Cultural Plan for Recovery are attached. Seize this moment. Support the heart, soul, and economic engine of our city in this bold and groundbreaking way so we can set the standard for the world on how to heal, recover, and thrive with arts and culture for every citizen. Thank you for all your work.

## Cultural Plan For Recovery (CPR) - TOTAL ASK: $70M

**New York City's cultural community and those it employs and serves continue to grapple with the economic losses COVID brought. There is no recovery without the arts, and the below package ensures the City invests in this community in an equitable way that best reaches those people, programs, and organizations who need support and can lead the sector forward.**

**$15M** - Cultural Equity Fund created as a way of investing in BIPOC led / BIPOC serving cultural organizations in order to establish better equity in arts and cultural funding. Funding will go to organizations of all sizes to support:

- General operating support for BIPOC led organizations
- Advancement of Anti-racism work - with a priority given to BIPOC-led organizations

This fund begins to undo a history of systemic underfunding of cultural organizations in communities of color - and reflects decades of activism by those organizations via such alliances as the Cultural Equity Group. This Cultural Equity Fund also shows NYC's commitment to the CreateNYC plan by advancing social and racial justice throughout our cultural field. This fund answers the Urgency of Now.

**$30M** - Restoration of funding historically added at Adoption split 50/50 between CIGs and CDF funded program groups with a carve-out for CUNY Corps. This demonstrates a restoration of $20.2M from FY21 and an additional $9.8 investment to bring this funding back to prior levels. Also asking the Council for a full restoration of all initiatives, including the baselining of Coalition Theaters of Color.

**$5M** - Added to DCLA's budget to increase its capacity to support this investment in New York City's arts and cultural community.

**$10M** - Funding for non-profit performing arts, to keep them solvent while they remain shuttered and to support their additional cost when they can reopen. The nonprofit performing arts are uniquely harmed by the pandemic; they were the first to close and will be the last to reopen, and were largely shut out of State aid for for-profit performing arts venues. When these institutions are able to reopen, we anticipate that audiences will be greatly diminished—typically 80% full is the break-even point—and we will incur significant new costs to open safely (such as rapid testing of staff and artists and protocols like CLEAR for audiences). Short term relief will help this sector through this period. Funding should be commensurate with organization size to be meaningful.

**$10M** - Fund to invest in cultural groups in neighborhoods and communities hardest hit by COVID. Relief grants available to cultural organizations of every size to help them stabilize and recover from the economic devastation of COVID. This fund will target arts and culture groups and independent artists located in and/or doing work in communities hardest hit by COVID - determined by zip codes that had the highest infection and highest death tolls. It can also mean groups and artists in the disabled community who suffered disproportionately. The goal is to save the most vulnerable organizations, most at risk of closing, whose services are the most needed in these neighborhoods which had the fewest cultural assets before COVID.

## NATIONAL CREATIVE ECONOMY

- **Nationally arts and culture comprise 4.5% of the GDP, generating $878B for the economy**
- **The creative economy employs 5.1M people, and includes 674K creative businesses**
- **Arts add five times more value to the economy than agriculture**

## COVID IMPACT ON CREATIVE SECTOR

- **Arts, Culture, and Recreation sector saw a 54%** retraction between the last quarter of 2019 and mid-2020, with an estimated $77.5B total loss of revenue in 2020. That is double the shrinkage (percentage) of the transportation sector, 1.5 times the shrinkage experienced by the hospitality sector.
- **Nonprofit performing arts companies have seen a decline in revenues of nearly 54%** in Q3 of 2020. *This figure, however, **does not include for-profit** arts and arts-related businesses, whose decline has been far worse.*
- **61% of businesses in the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation sector reported that COVID-19 continues to have severe negative effects** as of the last week in November 2020. In comparison, the national average for all sectors is 31%.

## COVID IMPACT ON THE CREATIVE WORKFORCE

- **Arts, entertainment, and recreation have an unemployment rate 1.5 times that of the national unemployment rate**, representing the second greatest job loss sector in America
- **Artists are 3.6 times more likely to be self-employed** and are often employed part-time or in multiple jobs, resulting in chronic lack of access to employer-based healthcare. In addition, ancillary jobs are often in restaurants and hospitality, industries also decimated by the pandemic.
- **55% of creative workers have no financial reserves**
- **62% of creative workers have experienced a drastic decrease in work.** Actors, Dancers and Choreographers have seen an average **decline in employment of 55%**. Musicians, Singers and related workers have lost more than **72% of their income**.

## NY STATE CREATIVE ECONOMY

- **In New York State, the Creative Economy contributes 7.5% to the GSP, generating 484,000 jobs and $120B in economic activity.**
- **In just the third quarter of 2020, New York State's creative sector lost 280,000 jobs and $27 billion in economic activity**. One can deduce from this that the toll through March 2021 is actually closer to $81 billion, with another year left until it is anticipated that the industry will be operating again at full or near-full capacity.

- **Arts and culture drive the economy.** The average arts attendee spends approximately $31.47 beyond ticket costs on meals, retail, parking, lodging, local transportation, childcare, and souvenirs. These dollars provide vital income to local merchants, energize the arts districts, foster a healthy residential real estate market, and pay salaries and wages in non-arts sectors.

## CURRENT STATE OF SECTOR

- **As of March 2021, just 4% of businesses in the creative sector that were affected by the pandemic have returned to normal operations**.
- **Reopening will bring further financial strain**. Once businesses are permitted to re-open, reduced capacity and increased costs mean it will be many months before they are able to generate a sustainable amount of revenue.
- **A slower recovery for arts and culture will extend the length of recovery for the many industries the creative economy affects.**

# RELIEF EFFORTS

### PPP

- **PPP Loans provided coverage for approximately 2.5 months worth of salaries for an industry that has remained closed by government order for a full year**, and that is likely to take another full year to return to normal operations.
- **Freelance artists and culture workers**—upon which the sector depends---work as Independent Contractors or Sole Proprietors and **did not qualify for PPP loans due to their low net earnings on their 1040 Schedule C**. Now that the eligibility has changed to gross income (as of March 14, 2021), many of those same workers no longer qualify for a PPP loan through their banks because their credit has been ruined after a year of unemployment with little-to-no relief. **It is estimated that nationally, only 9% of independent contractors received PPP loans.**

### UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

- Many performing artists received less than the state maximum unemployment rate due to their mixed-income and mixed-state earnings in 2019 and 2020
- 86% of artists and cultural workers are receiving less than 50% of their previous income

### SVOG

Applications for the new Shuttered Venue Operators Grants have not yet opened up, though it is estimated that these grants will only provide relief for approximately 10% of the creative economy due to the restrictions around eligibility. Many companies are ineligible because:

- They are businesses that rely upon the performing arts sector, but are not venues or producers themselves (ex. costume, scenic and prop shops, lighting rental companies, production management companies, etc.);

- As Talent Agents, they represent directors, designers, or playwrights -- not performers

- They provide their tickets for free or at very low cost;
- They put their tickets on sale less than 60 days before the event;
- They produce only one or two productions each year.

## WHAT ARE OTHER STATES DOING?

More than 22 state and local governments have set up relief programs targeted at artists, musicians, and other creative occupations. Using CARES Act funds intended to provide relief for *just six months*, they have provided some relief for "nonprofit arts organizations, creative businesses, and artist-led microenterprises." The city of Austin, Texas, for instance, established the Music Disaster Relief Fund, providing $1,000 grants to musicians affected by COVID-19. Many governors devoted a portion of their states' CARES Act funds to arts and culture, including the following:

| State or Locality | Creative Economy Share of GSP | CARES Act Allocation to the Arts |
|---|---|---|
| California | 8.2% | $ 50,000,000 |
| Wisconsin | 3.1% | $ 40,000,000 |
| Ohio | 3.0% | $ 20,000,000 |
| Massachusetts | 4.8% | $ 10,000,000 |
| Douglas County, NE | 0.16% | $ 10,000,000 |
| **New York** | **7.5%** | **$ 490,000** |

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REQUEST to support NYC's independent artists and cultural workers

*The people in the arts and cultural sector who create and bring arts and culture to the public are essential to the economic recovery of New York's neighborhoods and in maintaining New York's creative edge in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.*

*This request creates a direct support mechanism for independent art workers that both extends immediate relief and lays the foundation for ongoing annual investment in the development of the city's creative workforce.*

It supports:

1. The development and creation of a city-wide Artists' Registry (first proposed in Council Intro 2195) to build a stronger information exchange to and from our sector's creative workforce, open to all residents regardless of immigration status. The Registry will build on other borough specific and discipline specific mailing lists and registries as well as the NYC Artists Corps. It will provide access to opportunities by linking, for example, to the NYC ID program and will further create a data mechanism for reporting on the sector's workforce, validating much-needed information for an often hard to reach segment of the city's general workforce.

2. The continuation of the NYC Artists Corps. This builds on and deepens the Mayor's commitment of $25M towards the launch of this initiative, which runs July through December. The program's growth throughout the year will strengthen new relationships in all boroughs with community organizations, arts organizations, and city agencies. This fund will capitalize on the program's work, and incorporate lessons learned from historic labor programs such as the CETA community engagement program, to build an invaluable creative workforce development program for NYC.

The ecosystem of the arts, cultural, and entertainment sector is driven by the fuel of creativity and talents of its largely invisible engine - *individual artists and cultural workers.* While the sector as a whole struggles to recover from the economic impact of the pandemic, the very people who are the mainstays of NYC's creative industries are running on empty, disproportionately impacting creative workers in historically under resourced communities.

In February NYS Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli highlighted that this sector saw the largest decline among all sectors in the city's economy due to COVID-19. Employment declined by *66%* over a one-year period ending in December 2020.

Lives throughout our sector have been upended by the realities of job losses and income losses in both the non-profit and profit creative worlds. This has only

exacerbated the income fragility that has long existed for individual art workers and has further impacted the neighborhoods in which they live and work. This funding for art workers acknowledges a major gap in our arts and cultural ecosystem, and seeks to address perennial workforce issues so essential to attracting and maintaining a creative workforce in NY.

NYC's CreateNYC cultural plan points out the need to better support the city's individual artists and shows how New Yorkers benefit from their engagement with artists. These initiatives take a transformational step towards changing the support system for our sector's workforce so artists and cultural workers can remain and thrive in New York; it positions NYC in a major leadership role in its commitment to the people – not just the objects and buildings – who are essential to the vitality and health of our arts and cultural ecosystem and to providing increased access for all New Yorkers to the impact of the arts in their lives. This major investment will allow New York to rebuild and recover with the renewed imagination and creativity and spirit this moment demands.

# MET COUNCIL

The Largest Jewish Communal Social Safety Net in America

Good afternoon Chair Levin and fellow General Welfare commissioners; thank you for inviting us to comment on the City's FY21-22 budget. My name is Jessica Chait; I am the Managing Director of the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty's Kosher Food Network.

For more than four decades, Met Council has been a defender and advocate for New Yorkers in need. We are America's largest Jewish social service charity, one of New York's biggest and most efficient human services agencies, and the largest Kosher Food Network operator in the country. Met Council provides hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers with critical services in their fight against poverty every year. As an organization founded on Jewish values, we serve immigrants, seniors living on fixed incomes, the un- and underemployed, and all others in need with dignity and empathy, regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion.

In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the immense emergency food need that has long existed in New York City. Today over 1.5 million New Yorkers are food insecure. Over half a million of them are children. The organizations working to fill this gap, such as Met Council, were also hurt during 2020. Thirty-eight percent of emergency food providers citywide shut down last year, often because the dedicated volunteers that are the backbone of the emergency feeding system are themselves vulnerable seniors who stayed home.

Due to COVID-19, Met Council's Kosher Food Network saw tremendous growth in emergency programming last year. In 2020 we provided balanced pantry bags to twice the number of clients we served in 2019, and we saw our monthly average number of clients go from 67,000 to almost 150,000. Our annual poundage of food distributed grew by over 200%, and we added dozens of new partners and programs to our network. This growth would not have been possible without the funding given to EFAP and P-FRED during FY20-21, and Met Council is genuinely grateful to this body for their support.

Met Council's network focuses particularly on providing culturally responsive emergency food. Our programs are open and available to any hungry New Yorker, and we tailor our food distribution to meet the specific needs of Kosher- and Halal-observant clients. These populations, and many others in New York, have specific dietary requirements that come with significant additional barriers. Kosher food is more expensive; our average chicken cost is 40% higher per pound than non-kosher options. Kosher and Halal products are available from fewer vendors, and public food sources often limited the quantities and varieties of Kosher and Halal food availability. At Met Council, we believe that all New Yorkers, including those with specific dietary requirements, must have dignified and equal access to food.

To ensure that this is possible, the City's budget must allocate appropriate baselined EFAP funding that meets culturally responsive dietary needs. Without a firm understanding of annual budget expectations, emergency feeding organizations lack the ability to hire full-time staff, build out adequate supply chains, understand the scope and scale of need in our City. Uncertain funding creates an emergency feeding landscape that lacks the professional staff required to serve hungry New Yorkers with dignity. This makes it increasingly challenging to provide nutritious food to hungry New Yorkers, causing clients with dietary restrictions to sift through programs and products that do not meet their needs. As we think about what baselining this funding would mean, we also strongly urge this body to consider a new and expedited RFP for HRA EFAP. Through this process, the City can collaborate with its emergency food partners to craft appropriate funding that reflects the genuine need of New Yorkers by accounting for the increased barriers to access that affect hungry communities with specific dietary restrictions.

Going forward, we firmly believe that the emergency food need in New York City will not decrease for quite some time. Though an economic recovery is on the horizon, we know first-hand that many food pantry users are struggling with back pay on rent, bills, and other debts from 2020. Additionally, many of those we serve have suffered pandemic-related job losses in industries that have yet to recover. The data trends we are seeing in 2021 clearly show that those who have historically relied on food pantries still do, and those who were new to pantries in 2020 have not stopped using our emergency food programs.

In the first four months of 2021, Met Council has supplied almost as many pounds of food as we provided during all of 2019. We are currently averaging 300,000 more pounds of monthly food than we did in 2020, during the height of COVID's impact on New York City. We continue to average close to 190,000 clients a month and have provided over 5 million meals from January to April. On average, that is one million meals more than we provided monthly in 2019 and over 350,000 more meals a month than we supplied in 2020.

By allocating continued funding for emergency food programs, such as the Kosher Food Network, and the pantry staff required to operate at this scale, the City is putting healthy, fresh, and culturally appropriate groceries directly into the hands of millions of hungry New Yorkers.

Met Council could not provide critical emergency food service to hundreds of thousands of hungry New Yorkers each year without the vital partnership of the New York City Council. We deeply value your leadership and look forward to working together as we strive to grow and baseline HRA EFAP, and new programs like P-FRED, in service of communities with culturally specific dietary requirements. We want to thank the Council for their support and implore this body to strongly consider continued, increasingly flexible, funding for food pantry capacity building and professionalization that will create an inclusive emergency food landscape for all New Yorkers.

Thank you,
Jessica Chait
Managing Director of Food Programs
Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty

TESTIMONY MAY 25, 2021 FROM JULIANA COPE, ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR DEVELOPMENT AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AT MIND-BUILDERS CREATIVE ARTS CETNER

Thank you all – distinguished and dedicated public officials for your service and for this opportunity to share the work of Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center and other community based organizations who are continuing to train the next generation of New York City civic leaders and cultural contributors and on behalf of the incredible youth, families, and neighborhoods we are so honored to serve.

Since 1978 Mind-Builders has been located in the underserved and under-resourced Northeast Bronx, In March 2020 we transferred all of our music, dance, theater, martial arts, and community folk culture research classes over to online platforms - still serving approximately 700 young people and families every week- and reopening with our PreK program in September and then dance and karate classes on site April 2021. Our students come from every zip code in the Bronx and beyond.

Currently, we have summer applications available on our website for more than 200 classes including free spaces for 55 teens to participate in visual arts, dance, spoken word and writing offered remotely and in person. Much needed one on one and group counseling is also provided. Mind-Builders employs 52 dedicated staff coming from the five boroughs: teaching artists, pre-kindergarten instructors, support and admin staff. Our work is woven into the fabric of our neighborhood and our staff continue to make transformation in the lives of our young people possible.

Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center is also one of 42 grateful recipients of funding through CTC (Coalition of Theatres of Color). Artistic productions and cultural organizations like ours are vital engines in our communities – for jobs, mental health, activism, education, youth development, empowering messages, and access to other local services. Our communities need us and your support is vital.

DRAFT

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**MIND-BUILDERS CREATIVE ARTS CENTER - TESTIMONY MAY 25, 2021**

**Thank you all – you, dedicated public officials for your service and for this opportunity to share the work of Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center and other community based organizations who are continuing to train the next generation of New York City civic leaders and cultural contributors and on behalf of the incredible youth, families, and neighborhoods we are so honored to serve.**

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Madaha Kinsey-Lamb, President/Founder

Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center, Bronx NY

www.mind-builders.org

MIND BUILDERS
CREATIVE ARTS CENTER

MIND-BUILDERS CREATIVE ARTS CENTER – BUDGET FINANCE TESTIMONY MAY 25, 2021

I am **Madaha Kinsey-Lamb, Executive Director and Founder of Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center**. Thank you all – you, dedicated public officials for your service and for this opportunity to share the work of Mind-Builders and other community based organizations who are continuing to train the next generation of New York City civic leaders and cultural contributors - and on behalf of the incredible youth, families, and neighborhoods we are so honored to serve.

**Since 1978 Mind-Builders has been located in the underserved and under-resourced Northeast Bronx. There were weeks and months over the past year when our community has had the highest COVID-19 infection rate in all of NYC. In March 2020 we transferred all of our music, dance, theater, and community folk culture research classes over to online platforms - still serving hundreds of young people and families every week, reopening with our Pre-Kindergarten program in September, and launching additional hybrid classes in-person on site last month with all of the strict safety protocols in place.**

**Our students come from every zip code in the Bronx and beyond**. **Currently, we have summer applications available on our website for more than 200 classes** including free spaces for teens to participate in visual arts, dance, spoken word and writing offered both remotely and in person – **mostly for young people from African American, Caribbean, Latinx, African, and Middle Eastern families**. Much needed **professional counseling by a certified therapist is also provided** free for youth, families and the community.

Mind-Builders employs 52 dedicated staff coming from the five boroughs: instructors, support, and admin staff. **Our work is woven into the fabric of our neighborhood and our staff continue to make transformation in the lives of our young people possible.**

Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center is also one of 42 grateful recipients of funding through CTC (Coalition of Theatres of Color). **Artistic productions and cultural organizations like ours are vital engines in our communities – for jobs, mental health, activism, education, youth development, empowering messages, and access to other local services. Our communities need us and your support is vital. Without arts and culture there is no recovery.**

**Make the Road New York**
**New York City Council Finance Committee Budget Hearing Testimony**
**May 25, 2021**

Good morning, my name is Katherine De Leon and I am a member of the legal services team at Make the Road New York. We thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify about our critical services for immigrant New Yorkers during this devastating pandemic and the funding needed to sustain them.

Make the Road New York is the largest grassroots immigrant organization in New York City, with a membership of over 24,000 low-income New Yorkers. We have 20 plus years of experience serving our communities, who have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic fallout. We have provided crucial health and legal survival services, while also engaging our members with community organizing, transformative education, and policy innovation.

We would like to thank the City Council for past support which has been essential during this immensely difficult past year. But prior cuts from bo†th the City and State have made it difficult to upscale to meet the drastically increased need of the most affected New Yorkers, who already lacked service providers and are labeled as hard-to-reach by government agencies. The communities we serve already face significant risk of COVID exposure and have died at the highest rates in New York. These extreme conditions have led to a dramatic increase in the need for legal, health and continued wraparound survival services. I would like to highlight six areas of service supported by City Council discretionary funding that play a key role in our overall strategy to support and uplift immigrant families and communities during this time.

**Adult Literacy Program:**
Our program serves 1,400 people a year, with all participants being 18 years or older, not enrolled in secondary school, and seeking to develop their English speaking, listening, reading and writing skills to be able to secure jobs, pursue education, and navigate life in the U.S. We continue to adjust our adult curriculum and programming to respond to new and ongoing COVID related needs while adhering to the rules of social distancing and tie critical 'know your rights' information into classes in an ongoing way so that thousands of immigrants can continue to learn English and access economic opportunity. We respectfully request that the City Council:

1) 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.

2) 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.

3) Invest $10.5 million in the adult literacy pilot project that the NYC Coalition for Adult Literacy had proposed prior to the pandemic.

4) 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).

This funding increase will: 1) significantly better serve the over 2 million new yorkers with limited English proficiency, no high school diploma, or both and, 2) better cover the costs of the work so that CBOs don't have to choose between financial stability and critical community services provision for the long term.

**Workplace Justice Project:** Second, we respectfully request the City Council renew and expand past funding for low-wage worker support services in the amount of $500,000 in legal services funding through the Low Wage Worker Initiative and $300,000 in supporting outreach and organizing funding under the Low Wage Worker Support Initiative. Past funding has allowed groups like MRNY to represent hundreds of workers on wage theft and discrimination claims. Through our project we conduct outreach, education, support, and emergency legal representation and guidance to low-income immigrant workers, including those who have been at the epicenter of the COVID pandemic. This work has become absolutely urgent as essential workers confront unprecedented dangerous conditions during the pandemic, laws that are rapidly changing.

As part of the Citywide Immigrant Legal Empowerment Collaborative (CILEC) Coalition, our workplace justice legal team represents hundreds of workers each year in cases to enforce their workplace rights and provides community rights education that reaches thousands more. Our coalition's work has never been more critical. Our clients have experienced first-hand the extent of the devastation the COVID-19 pandemic has wrought on low-wage and immigrant workers and workers of color, and the rise in workplace exploitation. Infections and deaths ravaged working-class immigrant, Black, and Brown communities like the ones where our members live, often in overcrowded multi-generational households, with multiple family members working in front-line jobs that have put them at high risk of infection. Even as the hope of vaccination brings us some hope, we see the long-lasting effects of the pandemic in record rates of economic calamity, job loss and financial insecurity, and a brewing housing crisis of untold proportions. The exclusion of many immigrants from critical federal programs and other forms of worker protections, including unemployment insurance and safety-net assistance, has further exacerbated already stark social and economic disparities in our city. After fighting hard to establish the Excluded Workers Fund, many of our clients will be eligible to apply for benefits for loss of income during the pandemic.

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic's first wave in New York City last summer, one of our clients, a custodian who worked seven days a week, fell sick. He followed all of the required procedures and notified their employer that he needed to quarantine for two weeks. His employer not only refused to pay him for the time he was out sick, but his hours were significantly reduced in retaliation for using his sick days. His case was referred to Make the Road for legal assistance, and we were able to send a demand letter to his employer and recover unpaid wages, sick leave, and penalties. This settlement provided critical financial relief and the employer was held accountable for violating the rights of our client.

Our clients have risked their health and safety working through a global pandemic to provide basic necessities for themselves and their families. Their sacrifices have been met with further exploitation, job loss, and financial hardship. Many are not eligible for government relief and depend on every dollar that they're owed. It's not uncommon for our members and clients to feel obligated to continue to work for employers despite work violations because their livelihoods depend on it. We are asking for increased funding because we know that our members and clients depend on legal representation and community right education to be able to enforce their workplace rights. We are counting on the New York City Council to prioritize the Low Wage Worker Initiative and Low Wage Worker Support Initiative so that we can continue to provide free legal services and outreach to essential and immigrant workers in low-wage, high violation industries throughout New York City as demand for those services is at an all-time high.

We strongly urge this delegation to demonstrate its commitment to low-wage and immigrant essential workers and stabilize this critical funding, and baseline $4 million for the Low Wage Worker Initiative and $1 million for the Low Wage Worker Support Initiative.

**Deportation Defense Project:** Third, we are requesting continued funding, including $1 million for the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative (RRLC) and an additional $250,000 in discretionary funding for MRNY's Deportation Defense Project, to support critical immigration legal services to meet the specific challenges our communities are facing.The RRLC, which includes legal providers UnLocal, NYLAG, and MRNY, represents community members who are detained and on the verge of being deported or who have orders of removal and are at risk of ICE detention. The RRLC also monitors ICE activity and trends, and works with organizers to provide real-time information to community members.

Our general Deportation Defense Program is a grassroots and community-based effort to provide critical outreach, organizing and legal services to immigrant communities who continue to be heavily targeted for deportation. Under the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, MRNY has worked around the clock to respond in real time to support community members who are already detained or those at risk of imminent detention.

Detained clients experience serious delays and challenges in securing any relief. Those who are locked up in overcrowded immigration detention centers face life-threatening COVID exposures. Our legal staff are filing requests to get people released from detention centers where the virus is putting their lives at risk, and are working with allies on solutions to eliminate the continued violent and harmful immigration enforcement activity impacting families in NYC.

Through the initiative our legal team also provides representation and guidance for DACA applications, citizenship, green card applications, family petitions, VAWA, U visas, and affirmative asylum applications. In addition, we hold virtual Know Your Rights trainings, and publish and distribute informational materials via social media and other platforms to provide policy updates as quickly as possible.

With this new federal administration, we fully expect and have already seen immigration legal needs become even more complex and numerous due to the shifts in policy and enforcement. Support through this initiative is pivotal for keeping our most vulnerable families safe, together, and able to thrive.

**Know Your Rights (KYR) Program/CWE:** Fourth, we request that the City Council restore funding toward the Consortium for Worker Education (CWE) and it's network of partners, which includes $5.1 million for community partners a part of "Jobs to Build On" and $2.2 million for the Worker Service Centers.

Specifically for Make the Road, we are asking for $200,000 under the Job Training and Placement Initiative to support our KYR immigration protection program. Funding supports our classes which serve members of unions, community groups, and immigrant service providers. The curriculum includes rights as immigrants in the workplace; responding to workplace raids and other immigration enforcement actions; support systems for family members in the event that someone is detained or deported; and how to access legal advice and representation. Since the onset of the pandemic, we have been holding our trainings on virtual platforms such as Zoom and Facebook Live until it is deemed safe to resume meeting in person. It is essential that we are able to continue these services with renewed funding and support from the Council, led by the Queens delegation.

It is also crucial that we are able to expand critical services through other organizations in CWE's Immigrant Protection Group. Restoring this funding would allow an additional 7,500 New Yorkers to receive this training in Fiscal Year 2022. The City Council's past commitment to community based workforce development resulted in tens of thousands of New Yorkers gaining meaningful employment with family-sustaining wages. These allocations are crucial for us and the nearly 40 workforce development providers throughout the City.

**Legal Services:** Fith, we ask that the City Council allocate $150,000 in funding under the Legal Services for the Working Poor Initiative to support our legal department in providing an array of services for low-income immigrant communities. This includes a full range of crucial civil legal services, including housing and eviction prevention; immigration; public benefits; healthcare and health insurance access; labor and employment; and civil rights (with a focus on language access and LGBTQ issues).

MRNY attorneys and advocates handle over 10,000 cases annually. Continued funding will allow us to work on a range of cases in our three NYC offices. We expect to use the funds to support these important, core services of our program: 1) fighting tenant harassment and preserving affordability, including access to subsidies and other public benefits; 2) combatting wage theft and discrimination in the workplace; and 3) representing community members in their affirmative applications for immigration relief.

**Health Programs:** Last, we request that the City Council maintain funding for Ending the Epidemic at $6 million, maintain its allocation for the Access Health Initiative to $2.5 million, maintain its $2 million allocation to the Immigrant Health Initiative, and restore $500,000 in funding to the MCCAP program to support efforts to help individuals understand how to use their insurance, resolve billing issues, etc. A full restoration of these funds is crucial to ensure that low-income individuals, communities of color, immigrants, individuals with special needs, and those in culturally and linguistically isolated communities can obtain information about their rights, access available health resources, and address health care disparities. Additionally, we respectfully ask the Brooklyn Delegation to support our recent initiative for Community Health Workers who are hired by Community Based Organizations but working in partnership with

Health + Hospitals facilities. Finally, the City should increase funding to $22 million for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) to support this critical source of food for more than 500 pantries and soup kitchens in the City. These Programs enable MRNY and other community-based organizations to reach out to immigrant families with information about their rights and available health resources and address health care disparities.

Thank you again to the Committee Chair, the entire Finance Committee, Speaker Johnson and the entire City Council for your ongoing support and consideration. Make the Road appreciates our partnership with each of you to ensure the respect and dignity of immigrant families in New York City. I hope you will give additional consideration to the requests we have made, and we look forward to working together in Fiscal Year 2022.

MWA
MUSIC WORKERS ALLIANCE

*The following was submitted by MWA to be considered as part of the testimony delivered in connection with the Tuesday, May 25, 2021 10:00 AM remote hearing by the New York City Council regarding the fiscal year 2022 executive budget*

How have artists fared during the shut down of the live performance industry this last year?

The NYS Comptroller reported: "As of December 2020, arts, entertainment and recreation employment declined by 66 percent from one year earlier, the largest decline among the City's economic sectors." Around the same time, MWA found that 71% of musicians and DJs surveyed have lost three quarters or more of their income during the pandemic, due to the necessary closure of concerts and theaters; of clubs, restaurants, festivals and touring; the restrictions on person-to-person gathering during this last fourteen months—roughly 420 days, and counting.

Many of our workplaces are barely hanging on financially; some have closed permanently. Middle- and working-class musicians who stage online performances find that they earn a tiny fraction of what pre-COVID in-person work brought in. And so we've subsisted on state unemployment benefits...or we've left New York and moved to less expensive cities and states...or moved back in with our parents...or have abandoned the profession we have trained for and worked in for years and decades. Music workers will be trying to climb out of that deep hole until the time when enough audience members are willing to congregate. When will that be? September? October? 2022? No one knows for sure, but until New York State's arts and culture sector is back to full operation, musicians will need equitably distributed financial support, including funded arts jobs.

Has the Federal relief been enough? No. One small example of how the system has failed our city's artists. NYS Comptroller reported: "Federal Paycheck Protection Program loans supported 62 percent of firms and 70 percent of employment in the sector." While much was made of PPP Loans being made to individual artists, MWA found that only 11% of responding artists received them, though more than twice as many tried to access these loans. This is consistent with the finding from a recent ExtendPUA report that only 9% of their constituents benefitted from PPP.

Similarly, none of the $15 billion Save Our Stages bill passed as part of last December's stimulus package was earmarked for the musicians performing on those stages, and little if any received.

Meanwhile, some parts of American business are raking it in. In 2020, Walmart's yearly net profit was almost $15 billion. In the first three months of 2021, Amazon reported $8.1 billion of net profit, compared to $2.5 billion in the first quarter of 2020. Clearly, our economic system can fund the pandemic-era survival of its arts workers.

While other industries successfully transitioned to online formats during the shutdowns, this was not possible for music workers: Federal failure to cure "imbalance" in the online business environment by implementing reforms called for in the 5/21/20 US Copyright Office report have left most music workers with a depressed market in the digital domain, even while YouTube/Google Alphabet reported a net of $17.93 billion in the first quarter of 2021, much of it based on musical "content", and Major Labels with huge back-catalogues have

benefited.

International touring, a mainstay for many music workers, was almost entirely shut down by travel restrictions from March 2020 through May 2021. It remains difficult and unstable, its full recovery date uncertain.

MWA fought for a WPA program to fund artists in New York State, and give them a chance to work with dignity. 17 State Senators and 22 Assembly Members agreed that this was a priority, cosponsoring a bill to establish a Works Progress Program to pay out of work artists, but the bills never passed. New York State made a gesture towards the arts field, at one point promising $100M in new funds to benefit the arts, but refused to designate funds to benefit individual artists, and in the end, decided that only $40M would go to arts nonprofits funded by NYSCA.

Works of art—and the labor of arts workers—cultivate, transmit, highlight and inspire our innate human creativity, across cultures, generations, and beyond physical and mental borders. They generate and stimulate vast economic activity in this city and state. It's time to end the era of giving mere lip service to supporting the arts, while neglecting the needs of the artists.

MWA believes that New York City can have the vision and leadership to center the needs of individual artists in the recovery from COVID 19. We believe the city has the ability to prioritize accountability to artists - whether it's accurately measuring the city's artists, their ability to make a living, and the relief funds they have been able to access, or ensuring that the city's artists are consistently paid minimum prevailing wage standards, or ensuring that artists are given space in the NYC budget to do what they do best. Funds for artists need to be equitably accessed so that all artists are able to benefit, not just the ones that intersect with a nonprofit organization. We call on the City Council to support music workers meaningfully through dedicated relief and work funding that will benefit ALL music workers, through supportive legislation to ensure that this work is done with dignity, that we have access to affordable and accessible workspace, and where outcomes are measured and reported back to the community.

Attached to this statement please find a copy of the MWA How Are We Surviving Report from November 2021.

**About Music Workers Alliance**

Music Workers Alliance is an organization of, by, and for independent musicians and DJs. Our mission is to further Musician/DJ empowerment through collective economic and political action. MWA members are affiliated with Arts for Art, Building Beats, Indie Musicians Caucus and the Jazz Advisory Committee of Local 802 AFM, MOMENT NYC, Musicians for Musicians, NYC Artist Coalition, Sound Mind Collective, Underground Producers Alliance and many other organizations.

https://musicworkersalliance.org/

MUSIC WORKERS ALLIANCE

# Music Workers Alliance “How Are We Surviving” Survey Summary Report

December 17, 2020

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## Summary


Nearly three quarters of musicians and DJs surveyed have lost more than 75% of their income during the pandemic, according to the Music Workers Alliance “How Are We Surviving” survey of nearly 300 musicians and DJs in November and December 2020. Respondents reported losing more than $8.5M since March. Musicians and DJs receiving unemployment face significant precarity, with a significant number having depleted their savings, having moved to save money, and considering finding new jobs in other fields. The survey also uncovers the inaccessibility of many relief programs - with only 11% of musicians and DJs having received PPP loans, for example - and how critical unemployment and pandemic unemployment benefits have been for formerly working musicians and DJs, most of whom don’t know when they will get back to work.


TOP FINDINGS

1. Nearly three quarters of musicians and DJs surveyed have lost more than 75% of their income during the pandemic.
2. Overall, more than $8.5M was estimated as reported lost by 213 of the survey respondents since March. This is consistent with the national Artist Relief survey which estimated artists had lost on average about $30,000 each due to the pandemic this year.
3. Formerly working musicians and DJs are facing significant precarity even while receiving unemployment. 33% have depleted their savings, 33% are considering finding new jobs in other fields, and 15% have had to move to save money. As the first wave of initial relief rolled out in April and May recedes, many artists see their options shrinking without continued assistance.
4. Many noted that they did not receive the correct right amount from unemployment, because they were either mixed income workers or received income from multiple states.

5. While much was made of PPP Loans being made to individual artists, only 11% of responding artists received them. This is consistent with the finding from a recent ExtendPUA report that only 9% of their constituents benefitted from PPP.
6. A small minority of musicians and DJs are working during the pandemic. And when they do it is often for free or for less than they would have before the pandemic. Less than 20% of musicians and DJs are active with livestream and online performances, and only 10% are performing live in a significant way. Most musicians and DJs are asked to play for free or are underpaid for online / livestream performances.

**1. 71% of musicians and DJs surveyed have lost more than three quarters of their income during the pandemic**

Prior to the pandemic, most respondents were performing 50-200+ shows a year, and most did not teach (only 22% had access to significant teaching income). Prior to the pandemic, only 17% of respondents had access to significant income from work under union contract.

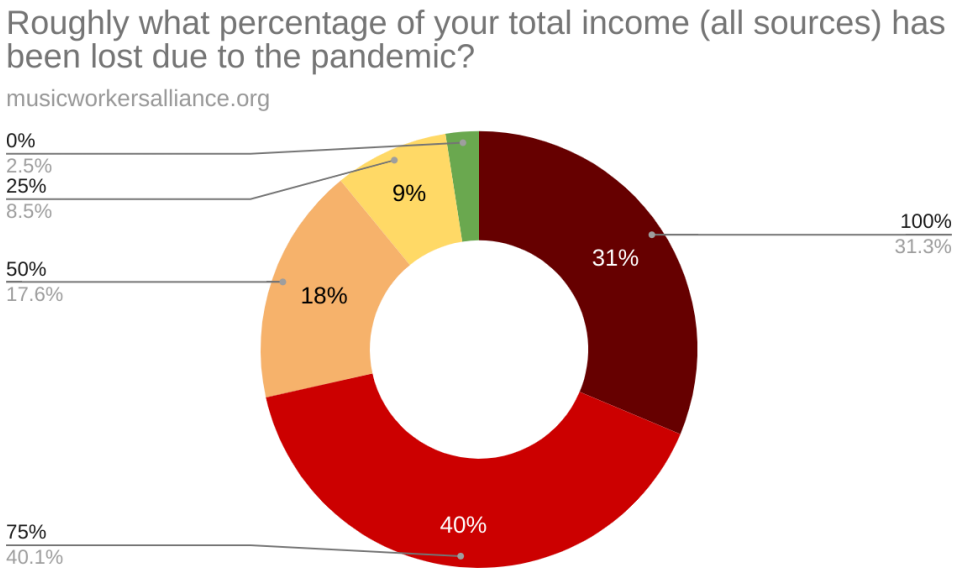
*"The pandemic has only exaggerated and exacerbated inequities in the system that have allowed for musicians to be exploited to a greater degree than ever before."*

*"We've been completely abandoned by our national government."*

*"My students have been with me for a very long time, but I am afraid I will lose them forever after such a long hiatus."*

**2. More than $8.5M was estimated as reported lost by 213 of the survey respondents since March.**

Respondents were asked to estimate their annual income, and 213 of them (76%) provided their income information, which ranged from $12,000-$424,000 with a median income of $41,000. Respondents were also asked to estimate how much of their income has been lost due to the pandemic.



The combined total of the estimated lost income for each of the 76% of respondents who provided income information is $8,544,250. This is consistent with the national Artist Relief survey which estimated artists had lost on average about $30,000 due to the pandemic this year.

**3. Formerly working musicians and DJs are facing significant precarity even while receiving unemployment.**

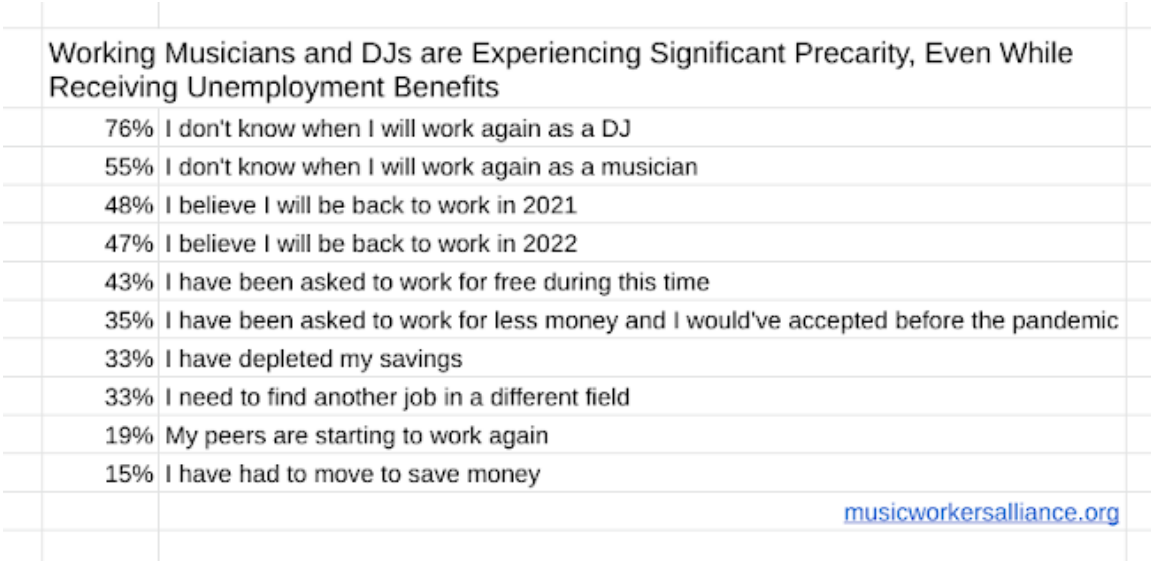
33% have depleted their savings, 33% are considering finding new jobs in other fields, and 15% have had to move to save money. While there was a wave of initial relief rolled out in April and May, while many artist still wait for the “second wave,” their options are shrinking

*“The first round of pandemic relief helped us stay afloat but those resources have been depleted and we’re digging ourselves in a hole.”*

*“I am weeks away from losing my apartment - am an owner, not a renter, and therefore don't qualify for rent relief.”*

*“We have managed to pay our rent since Covid started in March 2019 and now my wife and I are very worried we want [sic] be able to when Unemployment ends in December. We don’t want to become homeless🙏🏽”*

*“the end of enhanced unemployment benefits is a ticking time bomb that will deplete my savings completely over time as long as the industry remains essentially frozen”*



| Working Musicians and DJs are Experiencing Significant Precarity, Even While Receiving Unemployment Benefits | |
|---|---|
| 76% | I don't know when I will work again as a DJ |
| 55% | I don't know when I will work again as a musician |
| 48% | I believe I will be back to work in 2021 |
| 47% | I believe I will be back to work in 2022 |
| 43% | I have been asked to work for free during this time |
| 35% | I have been asked to work for less money and I would've accepted before the pandemic |
| 33% | I have depleted my savings |
| 33% | I need to find another job in a different field |
| 19% | My peers are starting to work again |
| 15% | I have had to move to save money |
| | musicworkersalliance.org |

*“I am planning to go back to school to slowly pursue a career in healthcare, as I am unsure of when I will be able to make a living as a musician again.”*

*“I had to seek other work outside of my field because I don’t qualify for rental assistance. I’ve had to use credit to pay for schooling to do so.”*

**4. Many noted that they did not receive the correct right amount from unemployment, because they were either mixed income workers or received income from multiple states**

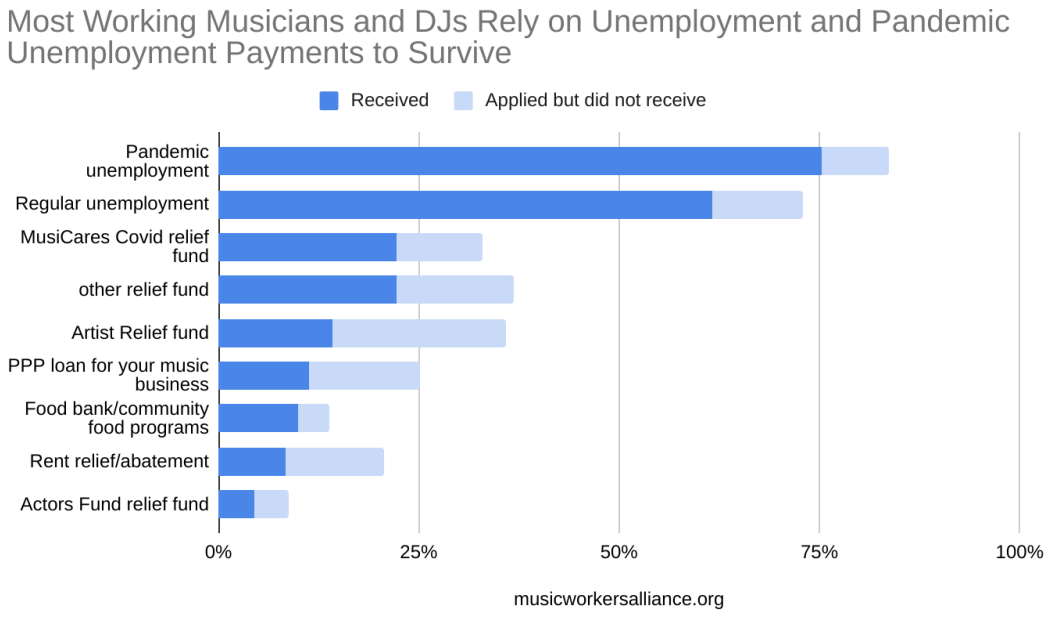
Prior to the How Are We Surviving Survey, over the summer, MWA offered assistance to musicians looking for advice on the unemployment process in New York and found that while about half of the applicants we were working with were 1099 workers, a significant portion - nearly a third - were mixed income. A recent report by ExtendPUA found that 17% of respondents (most of whom worked in Live Events and Entertainment) reported a mix of W-2 and 1099 income.

*"Re unemployment benefits: I am a hybrid worker with a small amount of W2 income (a 4hr/wk church singing job). That W2 income forced me into the Unemployment Insurance system, which calculated benefits on the W2 income alone (rather than taking 1099-MISC income into account). As a result I am only eligible for $100/wk UI. Any income over that amount in any week, and I lose the UI for that week, as well as any enhanced benefits, if they are reinstated. So at $400/mo UI, unemployment extension is not a huge priority for me. But if the way assistance is calculated is changed to be more inclusive of how my income is actually structured, then it would become a huge priority."*

*"When I applied for unemployment through EDD, the W2 income overrode the private contractor information so I've been getting the equivalent of 15% of my income from unemployment. Also if I make more than that in a week I receive no benefits. That's not close to enough to live on."*

**5. While much was made of PPP Loans being made to individual artists, only 11% of artists benefited, and most who applied did not receive funds.**

Of the more than 200 musicians and DJs who had lost three quarters or more of their income, 75% received pandemic unemployment, 62% received regular unemployment, and 11% received a PPP loan. While there are hundreds of artist relief funds that have emerged since the beginning of the shut-down crisis, these kinds of funds often end up being inaccessible to most artists who apply.




In the case of Artist Relief fund, for example, significantly more respondents applied unsuccessfully than received the grant. PPP Loans and rent abatement were similarly difficult to receive.

**6. A small minority of musicians and DJs are working during the pandemic. And when they do it is often for free or for less than they would have before the pandemic.**

Less than 20% of musicians and DJs are active (more than 10 performances since April) with livestream and online performances, and only 10% are performing live in a significant way (more than 10 performances since April). Most musicians and DJs are asked to play for free or are underpaid for online / livestream performances.

Live Streaming / Online Performances. While 74% of all respondents had tried live streaming / online performances since the lockdown, only 19% of all respondents noted they were doing live streaming in a significant way (10-100 performances). The median number of live streams by those who said they had tried it was only four live streamed / online performances since April. 61% of those reporting on their live stream performances played for free or were underpaid.

*"Did two unpaid livestreamed mini-recitals from my personal Facebook page in the early weeks of the shutdowns, solely for the sake of making and sharing music…"*

*"Most of them have just been streams that I or my band have decided to do. These were not ticketed, and were mainly to connect with our audience, although a few people did venmo us…"*

*"Some performances were from my living room, or from a church service, others were held at a venue with no audience. Tip Jar only for all musicians."*

*"...All streams were free to access to the public. The only way I could get paid for any of this work was through viewer tips via the organization or my personal Venmo."*

*"1/8 was ticketed and paid, the rest were not. Livestream only, no archive... We were mostly in charge of marketing."*

*"I do not have the time or resources to do an online performance."*

*"I have not been paid for any virtual performances."*

Live Performances. While a little more than half of all respondents had done a live performance since the lockdown, only 10% noted they were doing live performance in a significant way (10-70 performances). The median number of live performances by those who said they had tried it was three live performances since April. 72% of those reporting on their live performances have been playing outside. 37% of those reporting on their live performances played for free or were underpaid.

*"I filmed one video in which I made less than unemployment. I lost wages and worked about 20 hours. I am afraid I will be homeless soon because I can't find a job even in the food service industry"*

*"This is the first time I've worked on a donation basis - I never would have done that pre-pandemic."*

*"it was local, measures were taken for safety but some people did not follow protocols, especially after drinking alcohol, I did not feel safe, I had to insist people wear masks when speaking to me, I might not perform live again during covid"*

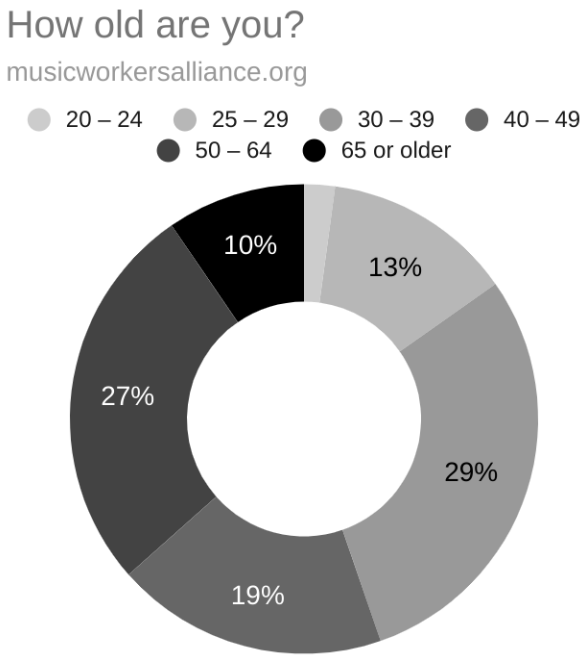
*“lots of places aren’t paying and rely on only tips from customers, which is still worth it for me, depending on venue. I think it’s wrong of them to do that. But I need the money. The only places I’ve played inside are private events that pay a lot.”*

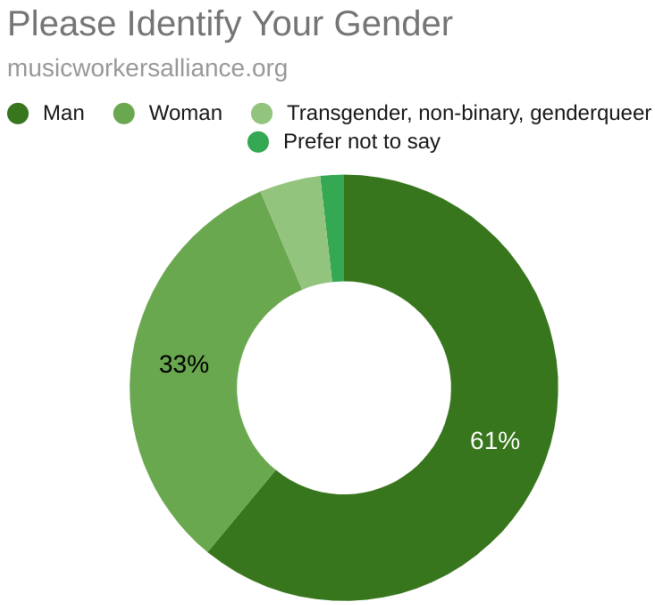
*“lower pay and more work.  Restricted audiences, no dancing or singing allowed even though they are usually outdoors.  Overall, playing live right now is a negative experience.”*

*“some indoor some outdoor, some for pay some for just tips. the indoor ones make me the most anxious, especially now as we are heading into winter. i feel between a rock and a hard place”*

*“I think my ability to make money as a musician will be much more difficult after the pandemic and as such I am attempting to change career fields.”*

**Respondent Demographics**




Location: Respondents hailed from 25 states and the District of Columbia, with the top three states being New York (181 respondents), California (26 respondents), and New Jersey (21 respondents).

Race and Ethnic Identity: Of the 199 respondents who had lost 75% or more of their income this year, 71% identified as white alone, 12% as black or african american alone, 6% as asian or asian american alone, 5% as latino latina or latinx, 1% as american indian alaskan native pacific islander or native hawaiian, 4% as multi-racial and/or multi-ethnic, and 3% as other or declined to say.

**Methodology and Credit**

The survey was promoted to Music Workers Alliance’s direct mailing list and on MWA’s Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook pages from October 23-December 13, 2020. MWA received 284 valid responses to the survey. The data from this survey is consistent with other data about working musicians in New York from American

Federation of Musicians Local 802, Future of Music Coalition's Artist Revenue Streams project, and the Artist Relief Fund. Respondents are considered representative of musicians and DJs who engage with Music Workers Alliance.

Survey questions can be found here: https://tinyurl.com/mwa-survey2020

The following individuals contributed to the survey design, analysis, and report on behalf of Music Workers Alliance: Jean Cook, Nathaniel Marro, Ty Citerman, Phillip Golub, Blair Sordetto, and Brian Halaas.

**About Music Workers Alliance**

Music Workers Alliance is an organization of, by, and for independent musicians and DJs. Our mission is to further Musician/DJ empowerment through collective economic and political action. MWA members are affiliated with Arts for Art, Building Beats, Indie Musicians Caucus and the Jazz Advisory Committee of Local 802 AFM, MOMENT NYC, Musicians for Musicians, NYC Artist Coalition, Sound Mind Collective, Underground Producers Alliance and many other organizations.

**Testimony to the New York City Council**
**Executive Budget Hearing**
**Tuesday, May 25, 2021**
**Sade Lythcott, Chief Executive Officer – National Black Theatre**
**Chair, Coalition of Theatre's of Color**
**Cultural Recovery for New York City's Recovery - FY22 Request**

- Good afternoon, My name is Sade Lythcott. I am  The CEO of the National Black Theatre and the Chair of Coalitions Of Theaters of Color (CTC). A coalition that Rep the largest body of culturally specific theaters in all 5 boroughs
- It has come from unexpected people in unexpected places. While standing on line to get vaccinated, in the grocery store, on facebook and in my inbox; People, strangers over the last year have stopped me to say: that NBT literally saved, their or their friend,'s life.
- You see CTC is a coalition that represents 52 cultural arts organization, most, in communities hardest hit by COVID-19, however The CTC is more than just theaters. CTC organizations especially in this past year have functioned as "safe havens" for artists and communities that identify as Black, Indigenoius, People of Color (BIPOC);

- Even through the extreme challenges and trauma of this past year our CTC organizations have continued to serve hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers with vitally needed cultural, educational, and social resources in local neighborhoods and to the broader residents living in the outer boroughs; From free Vaccination Hesitancy webinars conducted by Hi-Arts in East Harlem to the digital education and activism of Chinese Theater Works in Queens to Art therapy that Mind-Builders in bronx provide their kids, some who have lost both parents to covid-19.
-
- *Today in my abbreviated testimony,*

- *I would like to convey that There is no reopening or **Recovery** for our GREAT CITY without a comprehensive and an **equitable** plan for Arts & **CULTURE and that is why on behalf of the members of CTC we*** join our colleagues across the cultural sector asking you to support of the Cultural Plan for Recovery (CPR) and add $70M to the cultural budget in FY22. $15 million of which would go to the creation of historic, Cultural Equity Fund, but most importantly We are asking that you make a secure annual investment in our organizations by baseline the Coalition of Theatres of Color - prioritizing its founding members, most of whom have been serving NY residents for over a half century.
- We are beyond grateful to the council for voting that no harm come to the CTC initiative in FY21 and respectfully implore you to continue to move in the direction of budget justice with a more secure equitable distribution of funding as we heal our way forward.
- Thank you!
-

Council to take a stand and acknowledge the systemic and historic inequities that were playing out on your screens and in our lives; these statements of cultural solidarity were in the name of justice for all? Have we followed through on that?In 2021, as our world begins to connect again, I want to make sure that we did not look away from irrevocable truths that this city's funding structures are not equitable. miss our moment to make and assure the equitable future that we promised ourselves was possible. We have the will to create change, you have the intention to create change. At the systemic level, all you need is a plan. Well here is how we start:

There are systems of power that grant privilege and access unequally such that inequity and injustice result and perpetuate, and that must be continuously addressed and changed. We are not asking for charity, we are asking for you the council, stewards of the people's will to simply listen to the people. In the the findings / implementation of the 2017/2019 CreateNYC Plan and in the goals of the One New York Plan, outlined:

- The public's desire for more investment of resources in historically underserved communities
- Creation of a more equitable distribution of funding for arts, culture, and science
- Create new support for arts and cultural organizations with a primary mission of serving historically underrepresented/underserved communities.

- Sustained racialized public policies and institutional practices, both conscious and unconscious, have resulted in unequal access to education and resources for Black, Indigenious, People of Color (BIPOC) communities and artists. This systemic unequal access to opportunity has resulted in generations of unjust and inequitable outcomes for BIPOC communities.
- BIPOC arts organizations whose mission is to serve people of color and low-income communities report a median of only 5% of contributed revenue from individual donors. Disproportionately relying on government funding. This makes it an even greater imperative that public funding is allocated with an eye toward historic inequities. Cuts and insecure funding sources have proven to be more destabilizing and debilitating to BIPOC orgs than their mainstream counterparts.*
- Cultural equity is critical to the long-term viability of the arts sector and vitality of our City.
- **Significant investment in the arts and culture sector is needed now to repair this deep economic damage and to ensure the sector can lead a robust recovery throughout New York City. To succeed, such investment must include recovery support for the entire ecosystem of arts institutions, arts-related businesses *and* arts workers.**
- Arts and culture are an essential outlet and remedy for our communities mental health and social wellbeing, fostering creativity to help us express our values, and build bridges between cultures. Recovery of our sector will be a fundamental component in rebuilding a healthy city; strengthening the economy, equitably bolstering the socially and educational wellbeing of the hardest hit communities; benefits that are even more important in these difficult times.
- Statistics show that the hardest hit communities by COVID-19 are Black, Indigenous, and communities of color (BIPOC) with disproportionate rates of infection, deaths and unemployment. Historically, these communities, as well as the disability community have been severely under-resourced. Compounded with systemic inequalities, particularly in public funding, the economic impact on independent cultural workers from these communities and arts organizations that serve these communities have been devastating and will have serious long-term consequences if not addressed specifically.

- funding so that support from our beloved City is no longer is uncertain or insecure (as is our DCLA funding through CDF is competitive and uncertain as well). So that at least on this front we can have peace of mind that we can plan a future.

- **<u>We believe Baseline funding in the NYC budget will allow long standing inequities and marginalization of theatres like Black Spectrum to be recognized and corrected.</u>**

- CDF/Discretionary funding & cuts to the CTC would be destabilizing and will undoubtedly mean that over half of our theaters will be gone for good, some, that represent the only theaters of their kind in the country like AMERINDA serving and empowering American Indian Artists Inc.
- We are asking you to continue to stand with us and that not only, NO HARM come to the CTC initiative, but that our funding become baseline so that support from our beloved City is no longer is uncertain or insecure (as is our DCLA funding through CDF is competitive and uncertain as well). We are asking that you make an secure annual investment in our organizations So that at least on this front we can have peace of mind that we can plan a future.
- Together, we have the sacred responsibility of imagining and manifesting a new and more equitable city. This is your chance like the artists we all revere so, to be creative, to be bold, to take courageous risks towards budget justice! To shine light in these dark times into the spaces that need it most.
- Thank you!

**New York City Council**
**Preliminary Budget Hearing - Parks and Recreation**
**May 25, 2020**

**Testimony By: Sarah Charlop-Powers, Natural Areas Conservancy, Executive Director**

My name is Sarah Charlop-Powers and I am the Executive Director of the Natural Areas Conservancy. Thank you Councilmember Koo and the Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony about the proposed FY22 budget. The Natural Areas Conservancy is a nonprofit organization that was formed in 2012 with the goal of increasing the capacity of NYC Parks and its partners to restore and manage the 10,000 acres of forests and wetlands under the agency's jurisdiction. A signature project of our organization was the development of the "Forest Management Framework for New York City", which we released in partnership with NYC Parks in Spring 2018. This plan includes ecological and social metrics for the care of the city's natural forests and calls for an investment of $385 million to manage them over the next 25 years.

We were thrilled in 2019 by the leadership of the City Council and Mayor, which resulted in $43 million of expense funding for NYC Parks, including $4 million to support the management of 7,300 acres of forested natural areas. This funding was used to implement the first year of recommendations from the Forest Management Framework. NYC Parks was incredibly efficient with these funds. They employed 47 seasonal staff, planted 20,000 new trees and shrubs, engaged 2,000 volunteers, improved 40 miles of trails, and cared for 900 acres of parkland.

The plight of our City's natural areas has mirrored that of the full park system over the past year. Visitation to natural areas increased 65% between 2019 and 2020. At the same time, the Parks Department's ability to care for the ⅓ of parks property that is natural areas has been drastically impacted due to budget cuts and the loss of more than 50 seasonal staff. Another significant challenge is the impacts of the hiring freeze, which has left key leadership positions empty for more than a year and resulted in an incalculable loss of institutional knowledge.

Today, I stand with my trusted colleagues and friends in strong support of Play Fair, calling for the full reinstatement of funds that were cut from the agency's budget last year. It is imperative that next year's budget include $4.5 million to continue conserving and caring for our natural forests, and begin critical improvements for our City's wetlands and trails network.

Thank you again for your leadership and for the opportunity to express our support for increased investment in NYC Parks.

**Testimony of Nontraditional Employment for Women**

**FY22 Executive Budget Hearing Testimony**

Good morning. I am Erik Antokal and I am the AVP of Programs at of Nontraditional Employment for Women, or NEW, a nonprofit with a 43-year record of transforming the economic prospects for women through careers in unionized construction careers.

For fifteen years, the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York (BCTC) and its affiliate unions have set aside apprenticeship opportunities for graduates of NEW, 85% of whom are Black or brown women, and whose incomes are on average tripled simply by starting their careers in the building trades. These careers offer middle-class wages and benefits, safety protections that are even more important during the pandemic, and representation that counteracts employer abuses. In 2018, the BCTC committed to a historic 50% increase in set asides for women – 15% of apprenticeship slots are now reserved for graduates of NEW like Jasmine Jackson, an Ornamental Ironworker with Local 580. Now welding at some of New York's most complex projects, including Moynihan Station, Jackson has doubled her income and gained generous benefits since starting this new career which has kept her afloat during the pandemic that has hit so many so hard.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been pervasive in NEW's community, and the crisis continues to be disproportionately devastating for women. In the month of December 2020, black and brown women lost a net 160,000 jobs while white women and white men actually gained net employment (Gothamist, February 2021). Statistics like these have continued throughout the pandemic and will only get better if we help to secure union careers for women. In the face of such stark inequality, Partnerships between organized labor and community-based organizations like NEW thus become all the more important to infuse equity in our economic recovery.

City efforts and employer efforts to restore our economy must be done responsibly, with apprenticeship requirements, union worker protections and diversity goals so that we do not simply recover, but insulate the same communities that have been hit hardest by Covid from any future economic crisis. City efforts in capital construction, building retrofits and new building operations protocols and other projects can become engines of an inclusive recovery through investments in workforce development programs like NEW, so that all New Yorkers, regardless of background, can build a stable life for themselves following the immensely challenging year we have all endured.

Against this backdrop, NEW is seeking renewal of of the City Council's FY21 support, along with funding through the critical Job Training and Placement Initiative in the amount of $200,000. Our request for funding is as follows:

- $300,000 from Speaker Initiative Funding (a $100,000 increase above our FY21 funding to account for the increased demand for services among our community)
- $135,000 from Young Women's Initiative to support young women and girls in exploring trade careers in partnership with NYC Public Schools
- $200,000 from the Job Training and Placement Initiative

Thank you for your time and history of support for NEW and our community.

NEW 42

Dear Chair Dromm, Members of the Finance Committee, and Members of the New York City Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony on behalf of The New 42nd Street during the public's opportunity to comment on New York City's proposed FY22 Executive Budget. New 42 supports the operations of the New Victory Theater, New York City's premier theater for young people. The Theater's robust Education program is the largest provider of live performing arts and in-school programming in the City.

At the New Victory, we know the importance the performing arts play in the lives of young people. In addition to fostering imagination, building empathy, and helping to develop social and emotional skills, our own research shows the performing arts help kids imagine a brighter future for themselves. The performing arts give kids hope.

Despite a year in which we knew earned revenue would be greatly reduced, in FY21, New 42 was committed to serving New York City public schools to our absolute fullest potential, because we knew students and teachers were in need of the performing arts. We provided extensive virtual performing arts programming, including initiatives for students at all grade levels, and created an array of resources to support teachers in their remote and in-person classrooms.

Also, New Victory Teaching Artists led hundreds of live, virtual Classroom Workshops, engaging students in fun, creative activities. Teachers have noted greater participation from their students on days when our Teaching Artists visit their classrooms, with many more cameras on and more students present. Our Teaching Artists are trained in trauma-informed practices and respect the many difficulties students may be experiencing during this time.

The cuts to the Department of Education's budget for arts education to middle and high school students in FY21 were devastating, having sustained a $15 million cut to an already underfunded $21.5 million budget. This 70% reduction resulted in our partner teachers finding the modest cost of the New Victory Education program ($2 student tickets and a $100 admin fee) financially beyond their reach. For this reason, the New Victory Education program was entirely free to NYC public and charter schools in FY21; New 42 absorbed the full cost of the program, which was over $2 million.

We are thrilled our reach has far exceeded our original expectations. We had hoped for 80 school partners, but to date have over 100, representing every borough. New Victory Education is bringing vibrant performing arts programming to over 26,000 students in all grades, pre-K through 12, and is supporting the work of 1,450 classroom teachers. NYC schools are hungry to have the performing arts in their classrooms, because they understand the many ways in which students thrive through creative exploration.

New 42 is, of course, not the only cultural nonprofit that has risen to the challenge to provide high-quality arts education to NYC public schools during this difficult time. Many cultural organizations have gone the extra mile to serve young people and teachers, despite radical reductions to their own earned income because of the pandemic. But cultural organizations alone cannot adequately meet the fullness of the need New York City students have for arts education; the City must partner with us in this important work and take on a much greater portion of the financial responsibility.

NEW 42

We strongly encourage the City Council to fight to ensure the Department of Education's arts education budget returns to the previous level of $21.5 million, and if at all possible, to increase funding. This is an issue of fairness and equity, as attending and participating in the performing arts convey many benefits to young people, and far too many NYC public school students receive little or no arts education in their schools.

All students and teachers deserve full access to the performing arts and the many benefits they convey. We urge you to fully fund arts education so all students have the opportunity to experience the joy of the performing arts, and thereby imagine a brighter future for themselves.

Thank you.

Russell Granet
New 42nd Street President and CEO

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housing

**TESTIMONY OF GABRIELA SANDOVAL REQUENA**
**NEW DESTINY HOUSING SENIOR POLICY ANALYST**
**TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**
**ON THE EXECUTIVE BUDGET FOR FY 2022**

**May 25, 2021**

Thank you, Chairperson Dromm and members of the City Council Committee on Finance, for the opportunity to submit written testimony at this Executive Budget Hearing for Fiscal Year 2022.

New Destiny Housing is a 27-year-old nonprofit committed to ending the cycle of domestic violence and homelessness. We develop new affordable housing with voluntary on-site services and through our rapid rehousing program, HousingLink, we connect survivors of domestic violence with safe, permanent housing in New York City.

**FAMILY HOMELESSNESS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Nearly 80,000 individuals experienced homelessness in New York City on a single night in January 2020, and the majority of them were families with children.[1] For far too long, domestic violence has been the leading driver of family homelessness in the five boroughs. City data indicates that 41 percent of families entering the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelter identified domestic violence as the cause of their homelessness.[2] This is in addition to the more than 9,500 survivors who enter the separate Human Resources Administration (HRA) domestic violence (DV) shelters annually, the largest DV shelter system in the country.[3]

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only revealed our City's deep inequities, it has exacerbated the predicament of survivors. The domestic violence resource website, NYC Hope, saw a 110 percent increase in traffic when stay-at-home orders were imposed.[4] While the City has reported fewer families with children in shelter during the pandemic, there has been a 17.2 percentage increase in entries in DV shelter from the DHS family intake center, suggesting that more families with children are entering the shelter system due to abuse.[5]

**THE CYCLE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG SURVIVORS**

Despite the scale of the crisis, affordable housing options are not equitably accessible to DV survivors and their children. The Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) Homeless Set-Asides, the Special One Time Assistance (SOTA) program, and NYC 15/15, to name a few, are all unavailable to residents of domestic violence shelters. This exclusion of survivors from valuable housing

[1] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, The 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, 2021, page 38.
[2] NYC Comptroller, Housing Survivors: How New York City Can Increase Housing Stability for Survivors of Domestic Violence, 2019, page 11.
[3] NYC Department of Social Services, 2020 Annual Report on Exits from NYC Domestic Violence Shelters, page 3.
[4] Safe Horizon, Visits to New York City's Domestic Violence Website Surged Amid Coronavirus Pandemic, https://www.safehorizon.org/safe-horizon-in-the-news/nyc-domestic-violence-website-visits-coronavirus-pandemic/
[5] NYC Preliminary Mayor's Management Report, January 2021, page 156.

programs has contributed to their inability to attain safe, permanent housing and thus prolonging their shelter stay.

City data reveals that survivors are actually more likely to transfer from DV emergency shelter to another shelter rather than moving to permanent housing. The Department of Social Services' 2020 Annual Report on Exits from NYC Domestic Violence Shelters shows that 53 percent of the 2,341 families with children that exited the HRA DV emergency shelter were transferred to other shelters, upon reaching the State-set 90-day limit.[6] **That is 1,241 families with minors that left shelter for shelter.** This includes 352 families who were discharged to DV Tier II shelters, as well as 889 families that went to DHS shelter (either streamlined by HRA or administratively discharged and eventually went to DHS on their own).

The data is even more staggering when considering the percentage of families that exited DV emergency shelter for permanent housing: a mere 6 percent in 2020.[7] Only 57 of these families moved to an apartment with a rental subsidy, like CityFHEPS. The City spent well over $2 billion in shelter operations in Fiscal Year 2020, most of which funded family shelter operations.[8] Shelter exit data and shelter rising costs underscore the urgent need for the City to implement solutions that will effectively address the cycle of homelessness.

**NEW DESTINY'S RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is time for the City Council and the Mayor to take long overdue steps to give domestic violence survivors equal access to housing and break this cycle of homelessness for survivors and their children. New Destiny strongly recommends that Intro 146-B is passed and signed into law immediately, with sufficient funds added to the Fiscal Year 2022 budget. Beyond the budget, we ask that the City Council introduces legislation this year to allow HRA shelter residents equal access to HPD homeless set-aside units and that creates one daily census that counts all homeless New Yorkers.

For more information on our policy priorities to address homelessness among domestic violence survivors in New York City, please refer to our 2021 Policy Platform available on our website.

I also urge you to support the Family Homelessness Coalition's priorities, based on the needs identified by a broad-based coalition of shelter and housing providers, advocates, and other nonprofits helping homeless families in NYC.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. I welcome any questions.

**Gabriela Sandoval Requena**
Senior Policy Analyst at New Destiny Housing
gsrequena@newdestinyhousing.org
www.newdestinyhousing.org

[6] NYC Department of Social Services, 2020 Annual Report on Exits from NYC Domestic Violence Shelters, page 3.
[7] Ibid
[8] NYC Comptroller FY 2022 Agency Watch List, Homeless Services Provider Agencies, March 2021, page 2.




**Testimony to the New York City Council**
**Committee on Finance**
**Executive Budget Hearing for FY 2022**

**May 25, 2021**

Good afternoon, Chair Dromm and members of the Committee, and thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing. My name is Deyanira Del Rio and I am the co-director at New Economy Project, a citywide organization that works with community groups to build a just economy that works for all. Among our activities, New Economy Project coordinates coalitions and campaigns that are advancing public banking and community land trusts in NYC, as a matter of racial justice, economic democracy, and neighborhood equity.

New Economy Project coordinates the **citywide Community Land Trust (CLT) Initiative**, launched in FY2020, through which the City Council supports the formation and expansion of CLTs to address our city's affordability crisis and build community wealth. Through this groundbreaking and cost-effective initiative, the City is helping to create community-owned institutions--from the South and Northwest Bronx to East Harlem, the Lower East Side, Brownsville, East New York, and beyond—dedicated to creating and preserving deeply- and permanently-affordable housing, retail storefronts, cultural spaces, community gardens, community-owned solar, and other needs. CLTs are a proven model to protect public investment in affordable housing and other neighborhood development.

Over the past two years, and throughout the pandemic, the CLT initiative has made major progress--incorporating new CLTs and expanding existing ones; engaging thousands of community members in CLT education, organizing, and governance; spearheading mutual aid relief efforts; and much more. Two CLTs in the initiative have acquired first or new properties, while several others are negotiating for acquisitions.

**In FY22, the CLT Initiative seeks expanded funding of $1.51 million for 18 organizations, to ensure that CLTs are part of a comprehensive strategy to combat displacement and advance a just recovery in Black, brown and immigrant neighborhoods.** Increased funding will bring the CLT initiative in line with other initiatives, allowing groups to dedicate meaningful staffing and resources to this work. Full funding also will allow the initiative to engage two new CLTs in Manhattan and Western Queens and one additional citywide technical assistance provider.

(See attached one-pager detailing activities and participating organizations.)

NYC faces unprecedented threats of speculation and displacement in the wake of COVID-19. Strong CLTs, together with targeted policymaking and funding, will be essential to preventing evictions and ensuring a just recovery and rebuilding in Black and brown neighborhoods hardest-hit by the pandemic. We urge the City Council to sustain and deepen its commitment to CLTs at this critical time.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.

Community Land Trust Initiative

## FY2022 Discretionary Funding Request

The **citywide Community Land Trust (CLT) Initiative** requests **$1.51 million** in FY2022 City Council discretionary funding to support 14 community-based organizations and four citywide organizations working to develop CLTs and permanently-affordable housing, commercial and community spaces. Launched in FY2020, the initiative combats displacement and promotes community control of land and housing in Black and brown NYC neighborhoods, by incubating CLTs and providing comprehensive community outreach, education, organizing, and legal and technical support.

Throughout the pandemic, groups have sustained and deepened their work on CLTs and social housing, as a matter of public health, racial equity, and just recovery. CLT initiative funding has helped groups launch and expand CLTs in all five boroughs, develop strong grassroots leadership, engage thousands of community members, and organize for land and housing justice. Two CLTs have acquired properties, and others have completed site acquisition and feasibility plans. (The initiative received $855,000 in FY2020 and $637,250 in FY2021.)

In FY2022, we will continue to build CLT capacity and expand the initiative to include two new CLTs and a fourth technical assistance provider. (See map of participating organizations.)

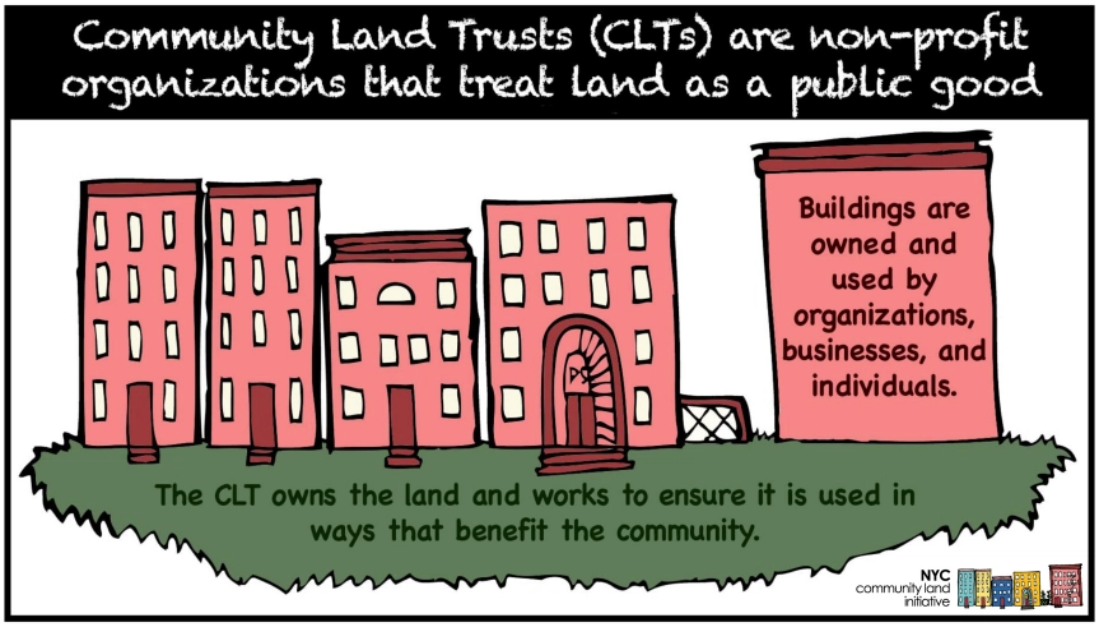


**In FY2022, the CLT initiative will engage 18 organizations to:**

- Provide 100 CLT education and organizing sessions--including virtual Town Halls and workshops--for tenants, homeowners, small business owners, and other stakeholders.
- Provide capacity-building training for 50 CLT board and steering committee members.
- Provide 35 legal and technical assistance engagements related to CLT incorporation, bylaws, developer partnerships, property research and acquisition, and more.
- Publish a CLT start-up guide and popular education material.
- Complete feasibility studies and acquire first (or additional) properties.

**The CLT initiative's long-term goals** include creating and preserving thousands of deeply- and permanently-affordable housing units; providing affordable commercial space for hundreds of small and cooperatively-owned businesses; and ensuring that public land and subsidy are preserved for permanent public benefit.

**CLTs are a proven model to protect public subsidy and facilitate community-led development.** CLTs are flexible and can support rental, limited-equity and mutual housing, as well as commercial and mixed-use development and other community needs. For example, Cooper Square CLT on the Lower East Side stewards more than 320 permanently-affordable homes for families earning as low as 30% AMI, as well as storefronts for 20 local small businesses. CLTs ensure permanent affordability of housing through ground leases that establish income, resale, and other restrictions.




**In the wake of COVID-19, CLTs are needed to combat displacement and ensure a just recovery.** CLTs are needed to strengthen and stabilize housing in Black and brown neighborhoods hardest-hit by the pandemic. With evictions and speculation looming, NYC must invest in CLTs and progressive housing and land ownership models that promote community safety and self-determination.

For more information, please contact Deyanira Del Rio at New Economy Project (dey@neweconomynyc.org).




**New Heritage Theatre Group,** (NHTG) is the oldest Black nonprofit theater company in NYC, founded in 1964 as New Heritage Repertory Theatre by Roger Furman, playwright/director who began his career in the 1940s with the American Negro Theatre. Since its inception NHTG has been a powerful force in the shaping of the cultural landscape of arts in the Harlem community and has launched the careers of many artists who have gone on to worldwide prominence. Voza Rivers, Executive Producer and Co-Founder, assumed leadership in 1993 after Furman's death. Today, NHTG continues to nurture and support artists working within and across the field of music, dance, theater, video, film, digital art and literature. Using its extensive history as a resource, NHTG identifies and presents primarily emerging and under-recognized artists of color, while also serving as a staging ground for more established artists to take risks that they could not pursue elsewhere. The programs range from commissioned works, as well as the presentation of innovative new performances and productions by playwrights, directors, filmmakers, choreographers, musicians, composers, and actors; as well as the screenings of documentaries and short films. New Heritage and its OSCAR and GRAMMY nominated free youth program, IMPACT Repertory Theatre, provide programs city-wide in all of the boroughs. Staff Size 5, Audience 25,000, Founding Member of CTC.

**New Heritage is asking the NY City Council to memorialize the importance of these Theaters of Color with the same baseline funding consideration given to the Cultural Institutions Groups (CIG - https://www.cignyc.org), as part of the City's obligation to make sure our theaters continue to provide the kind of opportunities that acknowledges the importance of Black, Latin and Asian theaters to the City of New York.**

**Testimony for the New York City Council Committee on Finance**
**on the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2022**

**May 25, 2021**
**Submitted by No Kid Hungry New York**

INTRODUCTION

Good morning Chair Dromm and members of the Committee on Finance of the New York City Council. My name is Rachel Sabella and I am the Director of No Kid Hungry New York. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing on the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2022.

First, we thank the City Council for your continued commitment to protect New Yorkers from food insecurity. The City Council has long been a leader in addressing food insecurity, from supporting Breakfast in the Classroom to the expansion of universal school meals to leading the charge for increased, baselined funding for food pantries and soup kitchens to ensuring addressing food insecurity remained a top priority throughout the pandemic. Now more than ever, we are grateful to count you as our partner in the fight against food insecurity.

No Kid Hungry New York is a campaign of Share Our Strength, a national anti-hunger organization dedicated to ending hunger and poverty. Using proven, practical strategies, our No Kid Hungry campaign builds public-private partnerships with the goal of ensuring children have access to the healthy food they need, every day. In response to the coronavirus pandemic, No Kid Hungry has provided emergency grants across all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico to help school districts, food banks, and other community organizations feed kids during this crisis. In addition to our grant-making, we have advocated for policies to address the unique barriers and unprecedented level of need brought on by this crisis—including national child nutrition waivers that offer flexibility to meal providers, expanded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Pandemic EBT—while offering strategic assistance to hundreds of local organizations. No Kid Hungry also launched a text line—"NYC FOOD" or "NYC COMIDA" to 877877—to help families locate meals and worked closely with the New York City Department of Education to customize the service to reflect their specific offerings. Since 2011, our No Kid Hungry New York campaign has helped connect millions of children across the state with school breakfast and summer meals.

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HUNGER AND POVERTY IN NEW YORK CITY

The coronavirus pandemic has affected all parts of our lives as New Yorkers. As of December 2020, the city's unemployment rate was 11%, an increase of over 250% since December 2019.[1] For many of our city's children and families, the pandemic and its economic consequences have had a disastrous impact on food security. Prior to the pandemic, 1 in 5 children were food insecure. **Now, recent estimates show that 1 in 4 children in New York City may have faced food insecurity over the last year.**[2]

Here's what food insecurity looks like: In some families, the pantry is completely empty. In others, mom or dad skips dinner a few nights a week so the kids can have something to eat in the evening. Many families are making impossible decisions between paying their ConEd bill or buying groceries. All of these scenarios have a profound effect on kids and families.

When kids don't get the consistent nutrition they need each day and throughout the year, it's harder for them to grow up healthy, happy, and strong. Consistent access to nutrition is linked to cognitive and physical development, test scores and long-term health and education outcomes. With the economic impacts of the coronavirus reverberating across the city, an entire generation is at stake. The New York City Council must work with Mayor de Blasio to take decisive action to ensure that children have adequate nutrition whether at school or at home.

As we continue to learn more about the far-reaching effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is clear that a decade of progress in improving child food security has likely been eliminated in a single year. Despite these challenging circumstances, there are numerous measures that the FY22 New York City budget CAN and MUST take to improve food access and food security for children and families across the city. By providing needed support to existing nutrition programs and by investing in outreach and awareness to connect families with federal nutrition programs, New York City can help to alleviate the impact of food insecurity for New Yorkers in every part of the city.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022 NEW YORK CITY BUDGET

**Increase Awareness, Outreach and Enrollment for Nutrition Programs**. With record unemployment numbers in New York City and across the country, safety net programs are more important than ever. Federal programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) exist to help families get back on their feet during hard times. However, these programs only work when people can access them. Current discussions and budgets show a cut to marketing and awareness budgets when the reverse should be true—New York City must invest increased funds into outreach and awareness programs.

With many New Yorkers qualifying for benefits for the first time and fear still associated with participation in some programs due to immigration status, there is a clear need for outreach efforts, in different languages, to inform communities about these programs and help eligible families enroll in them. Community based organizations in all 5 boroughs are engaged in this work and additional support would enable them to help even more New Yorkers use these programs to put food on the table. Recent actions by the federal government have temporarily increased SNAP benefits by 15% until September of

[1] https://labor.ny.gov/stats/laus.asp

[2] https://www.feedingamericaaction.org/the-impact-of-coronavirus-on-food-insecurity/

2021 which is even more reason for eligible New Yorkers to enroll in these programs now.

Safety net programs are important tools to help families in New York City weather this crisis, and investing in robust outreach and enrollment campaigns, including interagency outreach campaigns, will help families keep their children healthy and fed.

**Restore $6 Million in Funding for Breakfast in the Classroom.** In 2015, the New York City Council, Mayor de Blasio, and the New York City Department of Education made a bold commitment to equity, requiring all city elementary schools to implement Breakfast in the Classroom and ensuring students in those schools could start the school day with a nutritious breakfast. New York City became a national model for child nutrition programs and the City's commitment and success paved the way for New York State, which passed legislation in 2018 requiring breakfast be part of the school day for more than 1,400 schools statewide, including over 1,000 schools in New York City. Unfortunately, the budget includes a $6 million reduction in funding for Breakfast in the Classroom.

As part of their reopening guidelines for schools, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) strongly recommended providing meals in the classroom as a way to feed all children safely. As schools will likely have to employ measures of social distancing in the fall, it is imperative that DOE continue to have funding to protect and expand Breakfast in the Classroom options so that children and staff members remain safe.

As referenced earlier in my testimony, 1 in 4 children in New York City could face hunger due to the pandemic. Breakfast in the Classroom ensures more children are starting the day with a nutritious meal. It is also an essential tool in building greater equity among students, as it is the most inclusive way to ensure that all students are starting the day ready to learn, regardless of family income. When all students get breakfast, it helps to level the playing field as everyone starts the day with the nutrition they need to focus and learn. While the City may be opening up from the pandemic, the hunger crisis will be with us for many years to come so New York City must maintain and expand programs like Breakfast in the Classroom that feed children.

**Ensure the Office of Food and Nutrition Services Has Adequate Funding to Maintain Operations and Protect Kids and Staff.** The New York City Department of Education (DOE) Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS) changed their operations practically overnight starting March 16, 2020—the day school buildings officially closed in New York City—to ensure kids and families across the five boroughs had access to meals, whether they were attending school in-person or virtually. While school buildings were closed, they set up meal sites for students and their families in hundreds of school buildings across the city. When school buildings reopened for in-person learning in September they provided meals to students learning in-person and virtually. In addition, they created hundreds of community sites that serve meals to any New Yorker in need of a nutritious meal. Despite these absolutely herculean efforts, during the past year, OFNS has served fewer meals to children than they were serving pre-pandemic.

We also want to recognize the members of the DOE OFNS staff who are serving school meals on the front lines of the pandemic. The entire New York City school system relies on the incredible men and women of Local 372, DC 37 to provide nutritious meals to children during the school year. Now, they are helping to feed every New Yorker. As school buildings continue to provide meals to kids and families, we must ensure that OFNS has a robust supply of Personal Projective Equipment (PPE), masks, cleaning supplies and other resources needed to keep staff members safe and to continue their essential work of feeding New Yorkers.

**Strengthen the Emergency Food Network**. New York City must continue to add funding and support for the emergency food network in New York City. Food pantries and soup kitchens are the last line of defense against hunger for many families. The emergency food system is facing a double whammy of increased need and fewer providers to meet this need as many agencies were forced to close their doors due to the pandemic. Further, many organizations who were not directly involved in anti-hunger programs before were compelled to create new programs to address food insecurity for clients because the need is so high. It is clear that the hunger crisis is far from over. Funding for EFAP (Emergency Food Assistance Program), the Food Pantries Initiative and new funding streams created at the start of the pandemic to support food pantries and soup kitchens should continue and be expanded.

In 2016, the New York City Council created first-in-the-nation food and hygiene pantries in New York City public schools. The pantries provide food, cleaning products and personal supplies for the school community. With food insecurity on the rise, especially among children, investing in new school pantries would help families put food on the table.

## CONCLUSION

While the impact of the pandemic might be lessening, the hunger crisis it caused will be with us for many years to come. Despite these devastating circumstances, city agencies and nonprofit organizations have taken the necessary steps to feed children and families across the city. In order to rebuild stronger and help struggling New Yorkers, it is essential that we ALL come together to help the City rise again. As you continue deliberations on the FY22 New York City budget, we urge the New York City Council to continue to prioritize funding to programs that ensure no New Yorker faces hunger. No Kid Hungry New York stands at the ready to work with the New York City Council and our fellow New Yorkers to ensure all children and families have access to the food they need to thrive.

Sports & Arts in Schools Foundation

www.newyorkedge.org

# FY22 Executive Budget Hearing- Finance Committee

Hon. Daniel Dromm, Chair

*Submitted by Rachael Gazdick, CEO*

Thank you Chairman Dromm and Members of the Committee for the Council's long standing support of **New York Edge (NYE).**

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.**

And as my staff and I prepare for the New York Edge's 29th summer of providing FREE camp activities for youth across the city, 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.

The mission of New York Edge 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.

**And with the Council as our partner, we are succeeding in our mission: Eighty percent (80%) of Principals attest to the power of New York Edge in supporting academic improvement in their school.**

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:**

**Modern States Education Alliance** - a non-profit dedicated to making a high quality college education free of cost and accessible to any person who seeks one. We will be partnering with them to introduce their Freshman Year for Free™ (FYFF) program to our high school students and staff. FYFF lets students earn up to one year of college credit without tuition or textbook expense. The program is offered in partnership with edX, the leading online learning platform founded by Harvard and MIT. FYFF offers 30 high quality freshman college courses, taught by some of the world's leading universities and professors. Students can transfer credits earned to more than 2,000 colleges and universities across the country.

**One Million Guitars -** founded by internationally renowned Israeli singer-songwriter David Broza, One Million Guitars is a nonprofit organization that gives school children around the world hand-crafted guitars and the foundation of a musical education. One Million Guitars is sending New York Edge 250 guitars for our arts programs in elementary and middle schools.

**The U.S. Department of Education's Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program -** has awarded our **Excellence Project** a $3 million grant (over 5 years) to expand our work to identify underrepresented gifted & talented students in under-resourced schools and provide them with opportunities and support in seven additional elementary, middle and high schools.

**National Grid** – Grid for Good partnership which provides tools, resources and employment opportunities to help youth aged 16-24 pursue successful careers in the energy industry. We began in February with 49 participants and 14 National Grid volunteers who are presenting sessions on the energy industry and job skills to students.

I am so proud of my team for their dedication, tenacity and inventiveness in adapting our programs to the new COVID-19 reality AND beyond.

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.

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**Testimony of Bill Baccaglini**
**CEO and President**
**The New York Foundling**

**To the New York City Council Finance Committee**

**May 25, 2021**

As one of New York City's oldest and largest nonprofit providers of human services, all of us at The New York Foundling are grateful for the Council's partnership in addressing our community's urgent needs in a time of crisis. As the City begins to recover, it is vital that the City Council invest in our community's future, allowing us to emerge stronger and more resilient than ever before.

Since 1869, The Foundling has served the New York City community, protecting and nurturing the wellbeing of our neighbors. Today, our work touches the lives of 30,000 people every year, with a focus on helping our neighbors navigate complex systems and address intersecting needs. In 2020, The Foundling stepped up as a leader in our community's crisis response, responding with creativity and commitment to strengthen wellbeing across our spectrum of services. Today, we look to the future with hope and determination. Mindful of the disruption and setbacks our students have faced this year, we have prioritized educational services and school-based crisis prevention. Recognizing the toll that stress, isolation, and grief have taken on many of our neighbors, we are deepening our commitment to support mental health among all the people we serve. We cannot achieve our goals on our own, and we look to our partners in New York City Council to support us in helping our community recover.

For the past two years, The Foundling's Child Abuse Prevention Program (CAPP) has been allocated a generous grant of $248,000 from the Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault which has been crucial to our ability to prevent abuse from occurring and from going unreported. CAPP educates children and the adults in their lives about their right to safety and to how recognize, resist, and report abuse. Each CAPP workshop includes a presentation using life-sized puppets followed by an opportunity for children to speak to a trained counselor to ask questions, or to report abuse—disclosing traumas they have never been able to speak of before.

The Foundling is requesting renewed funding for CAPP to address the ongoing threat of child abuse at a critical moment for our community. Changes necessitated by the pandemic have placed tremendous stress on families and strained family relationships. This places children at serious risk—earlier this year, ten-year-old Aiden Wolfe was killed at home by an abusive family member. Increased online activity has also created a dangerous "opportunity" for internet predators. At the same time, children were cut off from teachers and other mandated reporters who are on the front lines of detecting and reporting signs of abuse to authorities. As our third and fourth grade students begin returning to in-person school, creating a safe environment for students to speak up about abuse they may have

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experienced during times of social isolation will be crucial to their safety and healing.

The Foundling is also requesting funding from the Council to support Mental Health Services for Adults with Developmental Disabilities. This largely immunocompromised population has significant health needs, and tends to be disproportionately impacted by co-occurring mental health diagnoses. Many have also been affected by histories of trauma resulting from abuse, isolation, and/or institutionalization. Their traumas have been amplified this year by the effects of the pandemic. An allocation of $100,000 would allow our staff to continue providing trauma-informed support for people who experienced retraumatization, anxiety, depression, and grief while coping with the loss of familiar routines—and in many cases, the loss of neighbors, relatives, or friends.

The Foundling has long served as a champion for youth, and we continue advocating for young people whose educations have been disrupted in this troubling time. As a founding member of the Fair Futures Coalition, we are calling upon the City to fully fund the Fair Futures model, which is designed to give young people in foster care the comprehensive supports they need to succeed, including long-term coaching and robust academic, career development, and independent living supports. Beginning in middle school, the program provides every child in foster care with a coach/tutor. The 60 entities that are part of the Fair Futures coalition represent some of the leading organizations and experts in this field. Fair Futures is already proving, with private funding, how the presence of one person in a child's life – one stable relationship – whether you call it coach or a mentor or a tutor – can mean the difference between success or failure for that child.

One-on-one tutoring, whether in person as it normally happens, or remotely during COVID, makes a marked difference in students' performance regardless of their age group. Among students engaged in The Foundling's program last year, 86% of ninth graders advanced to the tenth grade on time, compared to 50% Citywide. Also, on average, 84% of students in The Foundling's foster care who left high school did so with a diploma—the rate was 94% this past academic year, despite COVID—compared to 43% of students in foster care Citywide. And 61% of those students in our care enrolled in college. We expect to continue to surpass past graduation rates this year.

This is a simple, cost-effective strategy that is getting excellent results. We believe that if we gave every ninth grader in foster care a tutor/coach through high school and into college, we could increase the high school graduation rate to 90%, the college enrollment rate to 75%, and the college graduation rate to 50%. Based on our experience to date, with the right personnel – carefully screened and trained – those are achievable goals. For $20 million – a small amount relative to the overall education and child welfare budgets – a program like Fair Futures could be a game changer.

Once again, on behalf of all of us at The Foundling, we are grateful for the Council's commitment to supporting our community through this crisis and recovery. We hope to continue our partnership in the coming year to ensure that all New Yorkers are equipped with the resources they need to heal.

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MUSEUM & LIBRARY

**TESTIMONY TO THE COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

**TUESDAY, MAY 25, 2021**
**EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING**

Dear Chair Dromm and Members of the Council Committee on Finance:

Thank you for your service to the arts and culture community in New York City, and thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the New-York Historical Society, New York's oldest Museum. For over 200 years, New-York Historical has told the story of our nation's founding and history, using our vast collections to highlight under-told stories and diverse perspectives throughout that history. It is in very large part due to the continued support and generosity of the city government--in particular, the Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York City Council--that New-York Historical remains a strong, vibrant institution that presents exhibitions and educational initiatives reaching more than 400,000 students, teachers, and visitors each year.

The past year has been a transformative time for New-York Historical, and we have worked to respond quickly to unprecedented challenges while remaining committed to serving our audiences to the fullest extent possible. We are proud to have launched History @ Home, a suite of digital and virtual K-12 education resources, only a week after New York City school closures, and we have worked tirelessly to ensure that our educational, public, and family programming remain accessible to the broadest possible audience. Our building reopened to the public on September 11, 2020, and were thrilled to welcome in-person visitors back to our galleries.

## PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES

New-York Historical continues to recover from significant financial setbacks since March 2020, but despite these challenges, has remained committed to its mission of creating museum programming that highlights under-recognized stories, challenges traditional historical narratives, and enriches public understanding of our shared past. We hope this work will aid in the recovery of New York City's arts and culture sector, especially as the City prepares to welcome back tourists and visitors from across the globe. With generous contributions from the City through the Department of Cultural Affair's Cultural Development Fund, New-York Historical has a full slate of exhibition and educational programming planned for the year ahead. Our current and upcoming exhibitions include:

- ***Dreaming Together: New-York Historical Society and the Asia Society Museum*** (October 23, 2020 – July 25, 2021), a collaboration between New-York Historical and Asia Society Museum, featuring more than 35 interwoven works drawn from both art collections that generate dialogue about urban and natural environments, protest and rebellion, individuals and identities, and borders and crossings.
- ***Safe/Haven: Gay Life in 1950s Cherry Grove*** (May 14 – October 11, 2021), a special outdoor exhibition, free to the public, which explores the gay and lesbian community that flourished in Cherry Grove during a time when sexual exploration and self-expression was both stigmatized and criminalized in the straight world.
- ***Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg*** (October 1, 2021 – January 23. 2022), an expansive review of the justice's life and work, highlighting ceaseless efforts to protect civil rights and foster equal opportunity for all Americans.
- ***Treasures from the Elie and Sarah Hirschfeld Collection, Scenes of New York City*** (October 22, 2021 – Fall 2022), a celebration of views of New York City, featuring works by artists Marc Chagall, David Hockney, Edward Hopper, Jacob Lawrence, Louise Nevelson, Georgie O'Keeffe, Norman Rockwell, and Andy Warhol, among others.

In addition to our exhibition initiatives, New-York Historical also continues to expand the reach of our educational programming through History @ Home, which transformed its lauded gallery-based, in-school, and after-school history and civics education programs into powerful online education services, allowing us to serve our youngest and most vulnerable audience without interruption since the pandemic's start. **History @ Home has served nearly 88,000 students and teachers in Fiscal Year 2021 to date, and has reached nearly 120,000 students and teachers since its launch.** With the recent announcement that all New York City schools will return to in-person classes in the fall, New-York Historical is also preparing to seamlessly return to in-person and on-site programming, and will remain flexible to changing guidelines and protocols.

## CAPITAL PLANS

In Fiscal Year 2020, **New-York Historical partnered with The American LGBTQ+ Museum to bring forth plans to construct the City's first major museum dedicated to LGBTQ+ history and culture.** The Museum will be housed in the top floor of New-York Historical's expansion, encompassing a stunning gallery, roof garden and areas for offices and storage.

In the hope of receiving a major investment from the City of New York and the City Council, New-York Historical is prepared to begin this full building plan as early as July 2021. However, even if New-York Historical receives less than its hoped-for City support, it will proceed with construction in a phased approach, starting with construction of a single-story expansion in 2022, which will serve as the foundation for a multi-story project. **In both cases, this project will provide critical workforce development and job creation opportunities, allowing New-York Historical to help advance New York City's economic recovery in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic while bolstering the arts and culture sector.** While the multi-story expansion is under construction, The American LGBTQ+ Museum will partner with New-York Historical to develop programming in the Museum's existing building and outdoor spaces, bringing the voices, perspectives, actions, and achievements of this often-marginalized population to the foreground for hundreds of thousands of annual visitors and New York City schoolchildren, and serving as a major driver of tourism for the City.

The overall project will allow New-York Historical to dramatically expand the number of onsite classrooms, essential to provide service to tens of thousands of New York City public school students through education programs that explore battles for civil rights throughout our history, with a particular focus on our Academy for American Democracy. New galleries and collections study areas will host the graduate students in our new Masters in Museum Studies program, launched in 2019 with CUNY's School of Professional Studies in an effort to help diversify NYC's cultural workforce. Whether the project proceeds in phases or all at once, vital library stacks will be constructed underneath the new structure, supporting storage and conservation of our impressive collections which serve our education programs.

## CONCLUSION

The New-York Historical Society remains deeply grateful for the important programmatic and capital funds from New York City that have allowed us to expand our resources and adapt to the urgent needs of our local community. These funds will become even more essential in the months and years of recovery ahead. In this time of fiscal uncertainty, we remain grateful for the city's investment in cultural education and ask for the Committee's robust support as we work both to extend our service as an institution and to strengthen New York City's vibrant cultural landscape more broadly.

We thank you and your fellow City Council Members for your exceptional service.

NEW YORK HOUSINGCONFERENCE

**Testimony of Brendan Cheney, New York Housing Conference**

**New York City Council Finance Committee**
**Hearing on FY2022 Executive Budget**

**May 25, 2021**

Good afternoon Chair Dromm and members of the finance committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about Mayor Bill de Blasio's fiscal year 2022 budget. I am Brendan Cheney, director of policy and communications at the New York Housing Conference. NYHC is a nonprofit affordable housing policy and advocacy organization. As a broad-based coalition, our mission is to advance City, State and Federal policies and funding to support the development and preservation of decent and affordable housing for all New Yorkers.

We are testifying about the budget for the Department of Housing Preservation and Development. As you know, HPD is responsible for developing and preserving affordable housing as well as enforcing the city's housing code.

Last year at this time we strongly opposed the mayor's cuts to the housing capital budget. We were pleased when the mayor reversed course and restored the cuts in the fall and preliminary budgets. The executive budget has substantial housing capital funding, with $1.4 billion or more allocated each year in the plan.

While the capital funding is robust, we are worried that the agency will not have the staffing they need to fully utilize the city funding and incoming federal resources. We understand that key units responsible for development and preservation financing; special needs housing; design and building review; and legal review within the Department are currently understaffed with between 20 – 35 percent of their staff positions vacant. We also understand that for every 2 vacancies at the agency, they will be allowed to fill 1 spot, an improvement from the previous 3:1 ratio, but still insufficient.

We are calling on the city to allow HPD to fill every vacancy and that all hiring should be expedited and approved as quickly as possible. If the agency is unable to fill vacant positions, including project managers that review the development and preservation deals, the agency will not be able to close deals sufficiently to meet production goals and may leave federal resources unspent.

New York City was in a housing crisis before the pandemic began, with extreme housing instability, which has only gotten worse during the pandemic. More than 900,000 households in NYC were rent burdened before the pandemic, paying more than 30 percent of their income in rent, including 460,000 that were severely rent burdened, paying more than 50 percent of their income in rent. Meanwhile, more than 1 million renter households are at risk of eviction statewide owing more than $2 billion. Investing in housing is needed now more than ever to provide stable housing for New Yorkers. We also know that housing investment can spur economic recovery, as 100 units of affordable housing construction creates 230 jobs and $46 million in economic activity, and the city, state and national economy need additional stimulus to recover from the recession.

Sufficient staffing at HPD is also necessary so that the agency is prepared to utilize federal resources for recovery, including expanding federal investment in housing and to combat homelessness. New York City has recently been

allocated almost 8,000 additional Section 8 vouchers in the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Coordination between rental assistance and the housing plan will be critical to effectively utilizing these vouchers.

Filling vacancies now is also necessary to maintain sufficient staffing levels across HPD programs to ensure continuity between the current administration and New York City's next mayor. Without full staffing, the affordable housing pipeline can be disrupted leading to project delays and missed development opportunities.

The staff and leadership at HPD have been working hard to create and preserve record numbers of new housing units every year. Their ability to continue programs throughout the pandemic, even with reduced headcount and working remotely, has provided stability to the affordable housing pipeline and has demonstrated a commitment to New Yorkers in need of affordable housing during this time of crisis. With new federal resources coming in and significant city capital funding, the agency staff can only continue this record pace if the agency is sufficiently staffed to do the work.

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions, I can be reached at Brendan.cheney@thenyhc.org.

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**Zara Nasir_Anti-Violence Project Finance Hearing Testimony 5/25/21 (written)**

Good afternoon, Chair Dromm, and Finance Committee Members; my name is Zara Nasir and I work at the New York City Anti-Violence Project (AVP). My testimony today lays out the funding restorations we are seeking from the City Council that allows us to do our vital work of supporting LGBTQ survivors of violence and ending violence against LGBTQ people.

We appreciate the Council's past support of AVP, and our work with and for LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of violence. AVP is the only LGBTQ-specific anti-violence agency in New York City, the only LGBTQ-specific rape crisis center in New York State, and the largest organization in the country dedicated exclusively to working with LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of all forms of violence. AVP's work has a special focus on intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual violence (SV), hate violence (HV), hookup/pick-up/dating violence, stalking, and institutional violence. We operate a 24/7 hotline that is bilingual in English and Spanish and provide legal services, counseling, and community organizing and advocacy to our community.

We continue to provide all of our services and activities, which are free and confidential, in remote and online settings, including safety planning and crisis counseling, legal assistance, training and technical assistance, and community organizing and outreach.

AVP's core client base, those most impacted by violence and yet those with the least access to service, are even more vulnerable now a year into this crisis, and have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. AVP focuses our work on those most impacted by violence and inequity, including low-income (including homeless) New Yorkers; transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) communities; undocumented immigrants including those seeking asylum; people of color (including Black and Latinx New Yorkers who have some of the highest COVID-19 related fatalities in the city); individuals who are incarcerated or involved in the criminal legal system; sex workers; and those at the intersections of these identities.

Given that LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities already have poorer health outcomes than

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their non-LGBTQ peers living without HIV, the issues for our communities in this pandemic, particularly for queer and trans communities of color, are acute and urgent.

In addition to the health concerns, right now, many in our community are facing instability in other ways; many have lost part-time and full-time work, their access to health care may be limited, or they may be unable or afraid to seek resources because of their immigration status. Day after day, AVP hears from clients who have lost housing and employment as a direct result of the pandemic, or that they are sheltering in place with the very person causing them harm, whether it is an intimate partner, a roommate, or a family member, as intimate partner violence incidents rise during this pandemic. Over the past year, due to xenophobic, racist, and anti-LGBTQ hate speech from those in power across the country, our city has seen an increase in hate violence, including against our Asian and Pacific Islander American communities, and 2020 being one of the deadliest years for Black trans women in particular.

Every week, we get reports from the Office of the Prevention of Hate Crimes about anti-LGBTQ violence in this city, and we get daily calls to our hotline from LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of intimate partner, sexual, hate, and/or police violence requesting support and resources.

As these crises grow, so do the needs of our community, and so do the caseloads of clients and community members whose cases are now more complicated and need more time and effort from our staff. We are often having to reach out more frequently and do more support work with community members affected by increased and more complex webs of violence. We are also training more community members than ever in bystander intervention.

We strongly urge the City Council to restore funding to at least Fiscal Year 2020 levels. Last year's cuts to the City Council's FY21 discretionary funding had a damaging impact on organizations serving LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities of color. AVP almost had to lay off a quarter of our staff last year due to the reduced funding coming in from city, state, federal, and private funders. AVP holds other competitive contracts with HRA and MOCJ, and we use discretionary funds to expand that work further into marginalized communities. It is deeply

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disconcerting to have our remote work honored in one contract, but not others. When the cost of delivering services continues to go up, in the long term, this kind of underfunding and unpredictability deeply affects our ability to effectively serve LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of violence.

Additionally, the discretionary funding process is deeply important to engage grassroots organizations led by and serving communities of color who often do not have the organizational capacity to engage in the onerous City agency RFP process. We encourage the City to restore its discretionary budget to FY20 and find other ways to find savings and efficiencies in the FY22 budget. AVP is a part of the Communities United for Police Reform coalition calling for significant cuts to the NYPD budget so the City can spend that funding on vital services for marginalized New Yorkers including LGBTQ survivors of violence.

On that note, AVP is seeking a FY20-level restoration in our funding around general operations, DoVE, the Hate Crimes Prevention Initiative, the Outreach Work to Connect Persons Involved in the Sex Trades with Supportive Services initiative, Initiative for Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence, and Legal Services for the Working Poor Initiative.

**General operations (Request for $125,000, Speaker's Initiative).** City funding supports our most core and important work of operating our bilingual hotline and providing citywide, free direct social services including counseling and legal support, outreach, education, information, safety planning, and leadership development to LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of all forms of violence.

**DoVE (Request of $45,000).** Additionally, a restoration of funds for DoVE citywide will support AVP to work with LGBTQ survivors of violence and their specific needs when experiencing intimate partner violence. AVP will be able to continue to provide intake, crisis intervention, safety planning, and case management, including counseling, information, and referrals to provide support and safety for LGBTQ survivors of intimate partner violence through this funding. We thank the Speaker and Council Members Powers, Rivera, and Van Bramer for their

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past support of this funding.

**Hate Crimes Prevention Initiative (Restoration of $77,500).** AVP is also seeking a restoration under the Hate Crimes Prevention Initiative, an initiative that was completely cut in the FY21 discretionary budget. AVP played a key role in establishing the HCP initiative in 2019, and the funding supports our work to collect data about hate crimes against LGTBQ people, provide support services to survivors of hate violence, do community education including upstander/bystander intervention trainings, and do rapid incident response. AVP took leadership for the NYC Day Against Hate in February 2020, joining eight other partners to lead 20 bystander/upstander intervention trainings that trained hundreds of New Yorkers on effective techniques to de-escalate potentially violent incidents. This funding remains critical as violence against LGBTGNC people has not ceased during this time of social distancing, and anti-Asian bias and anti-semitism continues to rise. With a restoration in funding, AVP will continue to deliver bystander and upstander intervention trainings online on a bi-monthly basis, operate community-based, culturally competent reporting of hate violence incidents, provide free counseling services, and do rapid incident responses to violence.

**Outreach Work to Connect Persons Involved in the Sex Trades with Supportive Services initiative (Restoration of $100,000).** AVP also seeks to sustain funding to support outreach work to LGBTQ sex workers and those involved in the sex trades who are survivors of violence. AVP has been working to outreach to people in the sex trades and assess their needs for the planned services center, and has collaborated with community members to both plan outreach (now online) and support leadership development. AVP has also been leading a twice-a-month community space for LGBTQ sex workers to engage in peer support around safety in digitial spaces, Know Your Rights, and other important issues.

Additionally, AVP has received past funding under the **Initiative for Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence (Restoration of $55,000)** and **Legal Services for the Working Poor Initiative (Restoration of $47,500),** and seeks renewals under these initiatives. Our legal staff have expertise in working with LGBTQ and HIV-affected low-income and/or immigrant survivors

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of violence (including specific types of immigration relief such as asylum, VAWA petitions, U and T visas). This funding allows our legal department to continue to provide legal services around with civil legal matters such as name changes, asylum, family law, housing, public benefits, and outreach to the community including emergency legal clinics for immigrants, Know-Your-Rights Trainings; legal trainings for attorneys, judges, and advocates, and more. Our legal staff have seen a 30% increase in the number of clients seeking assistance with immigration matters in 2019 over 2018, with demand only continuing to increase. This funding is very important in serving this extremely vulnerable population, as LGBQ and TGNC immigrants and people with unstable documentation status are even more vulnerable during the COVID-19 crisis. These community members are not eligible for the stimulus checks distributed by the federal government, are often employed in unstable employment situations or informal economies, and are subjected to anti-LGBTQ and TGNC bias and violence, both here in the United States and also back in their country of origin if deported.

We appreciate our consideration of these requests of funding. We stand with our partners in the nonprofit sector advocating restore to FY22 discretionary funding to FY20 levels. The communities most impacted by COVID-19 are the communities heavily reliant on discretionary funding, which only accounts for 0.42% of the city budget. Discretionary funding is how small organizations closest to New Yorkers and organizations led by people of color get access to public funding. Instead of cutting discretionary funding, we call on the city to find more impactful efficiencies, while maintaining a low-cost budget line with huge impact for under-served communities.

We also support what other nonprofits are calling for: the City should allow restricted funding to be made into general operating support, eliminate the hearings requirement for FY21 contract registration, avoid retroactive cuts, including to approved indirect rates, give at least two weeks planning time if a program must end, and raise New York City's "lobbying threshold" from $5,000 to $10,000. These concrete actions the Council can take will support community based organizations led by and serving those most impacted by COVID-19.

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AVP looks forward to our continued partnership with the Council to ensure that NYC's LGBTQ communities have access to culturally responsive, inclusive, and affirming safety, support, and services, during and after this pandemic. We appreciate your past support of AVP, and our work with LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of violence, and hope for your continued support as we serve these populations during this tumultuous time. Thank you, Chairs Dromm, Rosenthal, and Kallos for the opportunity to testify.

Zara Nasir
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NEW YORK CITY CHARTER SCHOOL CENTER

It's about great public schools.

**The New York City Charter School Center**

**Erik Joerss, Director of Government Affairs**

**Testimony Presented to the New York City Council Committee on Finance**

**New York City Council Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget Hearings**

**May 25, 2021**

The New York City Charter School Center (Charter Center) respectfully submits the following testimony. The Charter Center thanks the New York City Council Committees on Education and Finance for providing the opportunity to comment on the Executive Budget Hearings on behalf of the New York City charter school sector.

For over twenty years, public charter schools have been an integral part of the public education system in New York City (NYC), and in the 2020-21 school year there are 267 public charter schools operating in the five boroughs. These public schools employ an estimated 11,350 public school teachers and educate over 138,000 students, representing over 13% of public school students, of which 90% are Black/African American or Latinx. New York's public charter schools are serving primarily low-income NYC families (over 79% are economically disadvantaged), offering additional high-quality educational options for families.

The students (and families) who attend NYC's public charter schools represent some of the communities hardest hit by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these obstacles, however, NYC's public charter schools – the most underfunded public schools in the NYC - have demonstrated a unique ability to pivot during the past year. [1] In addition to adapting content for remote learning and prioritizing student advancement, charters supported their families by immediately and continuously providing technology and ensuring wireless access. And understanding the unprecedented crisis that COVID-19 has wrought, many schools used their community partnerships and volunteerism from their staff to provide a range of supports, from

[1] *See* Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO), New York Charter Schools: Remote Instruction During COVID Crisis (Spring 2020) – Results for All Authorizers, 2020, available at: *https://credo.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj6481/f/ny_charter_schools_-_remote_instruction_-_2020_-_all_authorizers.pdf*. CREDO's study findings included that 91% of charter teachers increased the amount of time they communicated with families and when students were not present in remote classes, about two-thirds took additional steps such as conducting home visits, providing wireless hotspots, or reaching out the individual student's extended network to try and re-engage the student.

distributing food in their community to providing families essential supplies and rental assistance.

Across the nation, the COVID-19 pandemic has further intensified the disparities that exist amongst communities, and NYC is no different. The pandemic has also further illuminated and exacerbated the disparities between district and charter schools within NYC. Services and programs provided to district students by the NYC Department of Education (NYC DOE) have been withheld from charter students, even though charter school students are public school students. We provide just two examples of how disparities between charter students and district students have been exacerbated during this public health crisis.

All schools have had to shift from fully remote to blended and in-person learning models throughout this school year. Similarly, families struggled to balance their home-work lives and finding adequate and consistent childcare and supervision for their children. The NYC DOE's Learning Bridges program[2] was created to provide free childcare options for children from 3-K through grade 8 on remote learning days. Despite repeated requests for access to these seats, the NYC DOE excluded charter students from this program. Even when it was clear that there were seats available in the Learning Bridges program,[3] the NYC DOE continued to exclude charter students. This program was created to help communities hit hardest by the pandemic, and families were nonsensically denied access only because their student attended a public charter school instead of the district school.

Charter school students have also been unlawfully denied access to COVID-19 testing in schools. Despite clear statutory language requiring the NYC DOE to provide the same health services to charter and non-public students, NYC has refused to include charters in their weekly COVID-19 randomized testing program.[4] Even in schools where charters are co-located with a district school, potentially posing a public health risk for all in the building, charter students and staff were not tested. After the Charter Center along with several charter school filed a lawsuit to compel NYC to provide the testing services, a judge ordered NYC immediately begin testing. The judge characterized NYC's position as "beyond incredulous and illogical," but NYC has to this day refused to comply and is appealing the case.[5] Additionally, NYC was allocated $251 million in federal money specifically to use for reopening K-12 schools safely (including

[2] *See* Learning Bridges at *https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enrollment-help/learning-bridges.*
[3] New York Edge's Learning Labs aim to ease remote learning burden for parents (March 9, 2021) *ABCNY Eyewitness News*, available at *https://abc7ny.com/new-york-edge-learning-labs-remote-virtual/10400034/.*
[4] *See* Education Law Section 912.
[5] *See* 'Beyond incredulous': Manhattan judge green lights COVID testing for charter schools, blasts city officials for barring access, available at *https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/education/ny-nyc-covid-charter-schools-access-20210220-fla4qkgdsvafxm3afzm6rknjs4-story.html.*

providing COVID-19 testing in schools), but still NYC has not tested one charter student.[6] NYC's position on this issue: restricting schools' access to public health services during a global pandemic is indefensible and illegal.

With respect to the 2021-22 Fiscal Year Executive Budget Proposal, we were disappointed to see that among the influx of both federal and state money, the NYC DOE has not reinstated the District-Charter Partnership (DCP) program. The DCP program, which was one of the Equity and Excellence initiatives established in 2015, provided opportunities for over 350 charters and districts to come together in a variety of forums to learn and share with each other. This work has included School-to-School Partnerships; Professional Learning Partnerships; and Systemwide Partnerships. While it is understandable why program cuts such as this one had to be made to last year's budget (when all budgets were being cut and federal funding was uncertain), there is no reason the DCP program should not being reinstated in the 2021-22 school year. We provide two examples of the important work the DCP program started and request that funding is reinstated in this year's budget so it can continue.

As part of the School-to-School Partnership program, Campus District–Charter Partnerships (CDCOP) were created to build positive cross-sector relationships in more than 150 school buildings where district and charter schools are co-located. CDCP fostered collaboration between charters and district schools that share a campus through structured meetings focusing on topics of shared interest, including improving campus-wide instruction, student engagement, and parental involvement. These partnerships are even more important as schools prepare to come back this fall with 100% of students and as schools work together to maintain the health and safety of all in the buildings.

Another important DCP program was the District–Charter Special-Education Partnerships. While charter schools are autonomous in many respects, the NYC DOE is the local education agency (LEA) for special education in NYC charter schools, which means all decisions about the provision of special education services for charter students is made by the DOE's Committees on Special Education (CSEs). Special Education students make up 19% of charter school students, representing 25,758 students. All charter schools and families benefit from the central support for the CSEs that has been improved and expanded under this program. As charter schools work in partnership with the CSE to ensure students with disabilities receive all they need to make up for lost time, it is critical that funding for this partnership be restored along with the central DOE positions that support the provision of special education services to charter students.

[6] *See* Biden Administration to Invest More Than $12 Billion to Expand COVID-19 Testing, available at *https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/03/17/biden-administration-invest-more-than-12-billion-expand-covid-19-testing.html*.

New York City Environmental Justice Alliance
462 36th St, 3F, Brooklyn, NY 11232 | www.NYC-EJA.org

On the ground – and at the table

**Testimony for Committee on Finance - May 25th, 2020**

My name is Shravanthi Kanekal and I am the Resiliency Planner at the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance. I am also part of the Climate Works for All coalition and am submitting this testimony on behalf of the coalition.

Founded in 1991, the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA) is a non-profit, 501(c)3 citywide membership network linking grassroots organizations from low-income neighborhoods and communities of color in their struggle for environmental justice. NYC-EJA empowers its member organizations to advocate for improved environmental conditions and against inequitable environmental burdens by the coordination of campaigns designed to inform City and State policies. Through our efforts, member organizations coalesce around specific common issues that threaten the ability for low-income communities of color to thrive.

NYC-EJA is a co-founder of Climate Works for All (CW4A), a coalition of labor, community, faith, environmental justice, and climate organizations that have come together to fight climate change and inequality in NYC by demanding a Just Transition for workers and Environmental Justice communities.

New York City is in a time of crisis, as we are still experiencing the health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic while moving towards an ever worsening climate crisis. Among the worst hit institutions during the pandemic have been New York City's public schools, disrupting the lives of countless students, teachers, parents, and communities. Strategic planning about what happens next to the City's schools is crucial to shape recovery post-COVID, especially in frontline, low-income communities of color that have been disproportionately burdened not only by climate change but also by the pandemic.

We must invest in these frontline communities to help create Green, Healthy Schools for all New Yorkers. We must aim to address the economic recession, racial injustice and the climate crisis together. Now more than ever, it is critical that the City implement frontline-led solutions.

The Climate Works for All coalition is advocating for the following 2021 budget allocations to position ourselves to move towards an equitable recovery and not backtrack on climate and jobs accomplishments of the last few years.

- **$80 million to be allocated annually till 2035 for retrofitting K-12 public schools** to meet LL 97 standards by installing HVAC systems and other retrofits. This amounts to $1.08 billion over the next 13 years;
- **$100 million to be allocated annually till 2025 for Solar Installation on Schools** which amounts to $460 million over the next four years

This is a total of **$1.5 billion** that can be allocated to these priorities from the already allocated $3.8 billion DCAS sustainability funds. The installation of these solar panels and HVAC systems

in public schools will assist the city in meeting its sustainability goals of reducing greenhouse emissions by 2035 as defined in Local Law 97. In addition, these programs will create thousands of union jobs, move us towards climate goals, and directly invest in New York City's Black and brown communities. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the following unemployment crisis, creating good green, union jobs should be a priority. This is our opportunity to move forward with this.

In his final months in office, Mayor de Blasio should begin the process of investing $1.5 billion in solar panels and HVAC systems for New York City's public schools. This action would leave the next mayoral administration in a strong position to continue the job and invest the remaining $2.3 billion toward energy efficiency projects on other public city-owned buildings across the city.

This investment in creating Green, Healthy Schools can create good-paying, clean renewable energy jobs for New Yorkers across the city, including many women, immigrants, and people of color. Successful pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeship programs can train workers for these jobs, along with other long-term skills that are essential to maintaining sustainable careers in clean energy.

As New York City moves toward reopening of schools by September, 1.1 million public school students, teachers, and staff must also have daily, equitable access to clean air and feel safer breathing in their classrooms. Improving air quality control through HVAC systems will be crucial, especially as questions remain about the durability of vaccines against new variants of COVID-19.

Installing solar panels and air control systems like HVAC in public schools will allow Mayor de Blasio, and the next mayor, to foster more resilient neighborhoods and ensure the benefits of renewable energy reach low-income New Yorkers of color who are most impacted by COVID-19 and climate change.

Thank You,
Shravanthi Kanekal

# TESTIMONY

## NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE CHAIRMAN, DANIEL DROMM

*New York City Council Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget Hearings*

**Presented on Tuesday, May 25, 2021**

**Charlene Obernauer**
**Executive Director**

**New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health, Inc. (NYCOSH)**
**14 Wall Street, Ste 5A**
**New York, NY 10005**
**212-227-6440**

Thank you Chair Dromm and distinguished members of the City Council for conducting this hearing and for accepting testimony. My name is Charlene Obernauer and I am the Executive Director of the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health, NYCOSH. We are a membership organization of workers, unions, community-based organizations, workers' rights activists, and health and safety professionals. NYCOSH uses training, education, and advocacy to improve health and safety conditions in our workplaces, our communities, and our environment. Founded in 1979 on the principle that workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths are preventable, NYCOSH works to extend and defend every person's right to a safe and healthy workplace.

The New York Nail Salon Worker School, operated by the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH), is a program that empowers New York's nail salon workers to learn important on-the-job skills, gain confidence and higher incomes in their workplaces, and become licensed manicurists. The School offers mandatory training courses for manicurists to become licensed and prepares workers to take New York State exams. Once a technician has passed the test and received her license, she is able to perform her work in safer and healthier ways for herself and customers and she is able to more confidently advocate for applicable standards in her salon and the industry at large. The school has also become a base for creating community among nail salon workers and allowing workers to organize to advocate for better conditions in the industry.

Our school has been very successful due to the funding from the NYC Council. To date, the New York Nail Salon Worker School has a 95% pass rate on the written exam and 100% pass rate on the practical exam. As of May 26, 2021, 801 students have graduated since the School's founding in 2016. We continue to work with students to see that no one is left behind regardless of literacy or language barriers. We rely on the NYC Council for support and are asking again to be included in the budget.

Funding the initiatives that support the school have been cut (Low Wage Worker Support cut by 76% in FY'21, and Young Women's Leadership Development cut by 10%) and we ask that the Council consider fully funding these important initiatives to better support our School and other important programs.

New York City's nail salon workers have suffered the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many live in the areas of the city that were hit hardest by COVID, and a recent survey by the NY Nail Salon Workers Association found that 30 percent of workers tested positive for COVID, and many others believe they were infected by were unable to get a test. As salons reopen and business starts to pick up, it has become clear that many workers are returning to salons with unfair and unsafe conditions. According to a recent report by the NY NJ Regional Joint Board of Workers United/SEIU, , the average wage for New York nail salon workers is approximately $11.50 an hour, significantly less than the $15 per hour New York City minimum wage. Nail salon workers are also exposed to a toxic cocktail of chemicals on the job and are now exposed to COVID-19. The confusing mask mandates by the CDC allows consumers to be unmasked in

salons, which is particularly risky for workers. Now more than ever, nail salon workers are in need of the trusted resources that our school provides.

In response to the crisis that COVID-19 created for this workforce, we shifted many aspects of our School. First, we have included examples of exposure to COVID-19 throughout the curriculum to ensure that this information is a part of the learning modules. By prioritizing this information, we ensure that technicians have the most up-to-date information available and are educated on how to best protect themselves and their communities. Second, the courses take place online to ensure that students are not putting one another's health at risk. Third, in the outreach that we conduct to register students for the courses, we answer questions about occupational safety and health issues including potential exposure to COVID-19 to better advise them.

When nail salon workers become licensed manicurists instead of trainees, they are given a wider range of employment opportunities that allow them to transfer to higher-paying salons. Further, the program teaches nail salon workers essential skills as manicurists that also makes them likely to secure better employment opportunities as a result of the program. NYCOSH's School, by moving nail salon workers from trainees to licensed manicurists, is also an essential workforce development program for New York City. Since the program highlights treatment and conditions that are illegal the school's alumni are empowered to change an industry that has repeatedly made headlines for exploitive and dangerous conditions.

Hundreds of women are signed up to enroll in our school, which utilizes participatory-based education techniques to ensure our high success rates. We teach workers in a fundamentally different way than proprietary schools and include information that goes beyond the required curriculum. Many nail salon workers have never taken a written test before, for example, and NYCOSH's school incorporates these kinds of basic skills into its curriculum to ensure workers can be successful. Our education techniques account for the astounding pass rate for graduates of the New York Nail Salon Worker School and is precedent-setting for workers in the industry. NYCOSH has a long list of students who need our trainings, at times there are approximately one thousand women on our waiting list.

Therefore, we are seeking funding to increase our capacity to meet the needs of our student body. Getting people off our waiting list and into class is particularly crucial now when knowledge of health and safety, more than ever, is a matter of life and death for the customers, workers, and the families they go home to. The vast majority of nail workers are from the immigrant communities that were hardest hit by the pandemic. Many of these women must work regardless of the danger and our training goes a long way to make sure they do so safely and for a legal wage.

**COMMUNITY BENEFIT**

NYCOSH will direct resources to its New York Nail Salon Worker School, attended by primarily Asian and Latina immigrant women. Workers are exposed to dangerous health hazards like

glues, polishes, removers, and other products; and also risk infections from contact with clients' skin, nails, or blood. Nail polishes and other nail products commonly contain what's nicknamed the "toxic trio" of formaldehyde, dibutyl phthalate and toluene, which can have serious health ramifications when inhaled regularly without proper ventilation. Further, these workers have direct communication with clients on a day-to-day basis, putting them at risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Recent legislation has improved conditions for nail salon workers, implementing protective "trainee" status for unlicensed manicurists, but these workers need access to training programs to get their permanent licenses. NYCOSH's New York Nail Salon Workers' School offers these mandatory training courses and allows for nail salon workers to enter into a program that will increase their skills and their marketability in the industry so that they can earn living wages. The program also teaches nail salon workers on the fundamentals of safety and health in the industry so that they can work in a safe and healthy way and reduce, if not eliminate, their exposures to toxic chemicals and biological hazards in their salons, which is important for both worker safety and the safety of their customers.

In additional to providing an accessible way for nail salon workers to become licensed nail technicians, the school also provides a place for nail salon workers to create community and become involved in worker-led efforts to advocate for better conditions in the industry. NYCOSH partners with the NY NJ Regional Joint Board of Workers United/SEIU and Adhikaar through its work in the NY Health Nail Salons Coalition. Since 2014, the coalition has successfully advocated for the passage of reforms at the state level, including the elimination of the subminimum ("tipped") wage for nail salon workers in 2019, and continues to organize workers to fight for an industry centered around health, dignity, and justice.

NYCOSH's school is also the only non-proprietary nail salon school in New York State, and has a highly successful pass rate for students of 95%, due to the participatory nature of our training program. For limited-literacy students, NYCOSH's school is the only option. With support from FY 2021 Discretionary funding, NYCOSH was able to launch a supplemental program for students with limited literacy. Due to our high success rate, our school has a long waiting list and is very well-respected within the industry. The School is needed in the nail salon worker community and without it, many workers would be unlicensed and vulnerable to rampant exploitation.

**CONCLUSION**

The New York City Council has been an ally as we advocate for nail salon workers' rights and train technicians on how to be safe and healthy on the job, and ensure that they receive their licenses. We are asking that the Council continue to support this initiative.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony and we look forward to working with you in the future to create a better New York for nail salon workers.

**New York City Council**
**FY 2022 Executive Budget Hearing**
**Public Session**

May 25, 2021

**Testimony in support of**

**NYJTL Funding Under The**

**NYC Council Physical Education & Fitness Initiative**

Submitted on behalf of

**New York Junior Tennis & Learning**
**36-36 33rd Street, Suite 504**
**Long Island City, NY 11106**
**George Guimaraes**
**President & CEO**

Presented by

**Scott Daly**
**Senior Director**
**Community Tennis Programs**

On behalf of the Board and Staff of **New York Junior Tennis & Learning/NYJTL,** I would like to thank you for the Council's leadership as the City continues to emerge from the COVID-19 health crisis.

NYJTL, legally incorporated and funded as the **New York Junior Tennis League, Inc.**, has partnered with the Council for almost 50 years, bringing **FREE** tennis programming and instruction to young people throughout the city. We are the largest and most successful free community & scholastic tennis program in the country, serving as a model for all others.

**We are seeking a $1,200,000 allocation under the Council's *Physical Education & Fitness Initiative*. <u>These funds will enable us to continue to provide SAFE sport and much needed physical activities for children in every Borough in this upcoming fiscal year (2022).</u> Year round, Council citywide funding allows us to provide quality tennis, educational programming, and character development in EVERY Council District throughout the city as follows:**

- **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). **During the last full summer of programming in July & August 2019, 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 during 2020-2021 were suspended.*

- **Winter Weekend Indoor Program -** This program enables players to continue their progress during the 20-week indoor season and includes a number of NYJTL sponsored events: Hartman Cup Championships, Holiday Tournament, and Presidents' Week Tournament. This program runs from mid-November to early April. **This past winter (’20-’21) registration for this 6AM Saturday & Sunday morning program at 7 locations exceeded 700 registrants.** *Due to COVID-19, all tournaments and special events during 2020-2021 were suspended.*

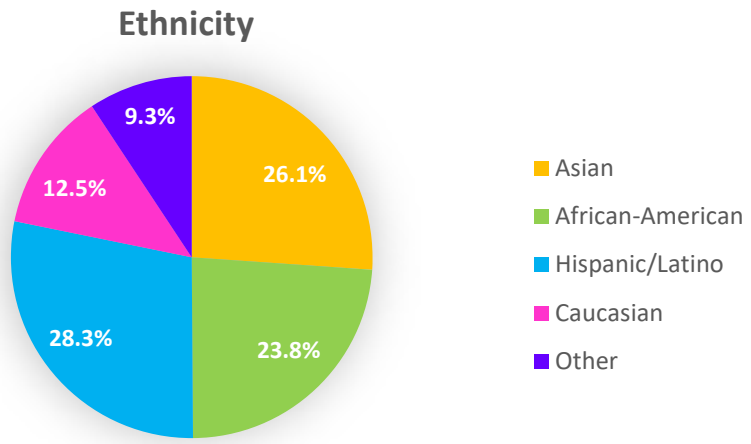
- **School-Time Tennis Program (STP)** – STP annually supplies free tennis equipment, teacher training, lesson plans and ongoing support to approximately **250** schools annually throughout the city to include tennis as a regular part of their physical educational curriculum. **NYJTL is a NYSED Approved 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. *While STP was suspended during this school year due to Covid, we expect full resumption of starting in September, 2021.*

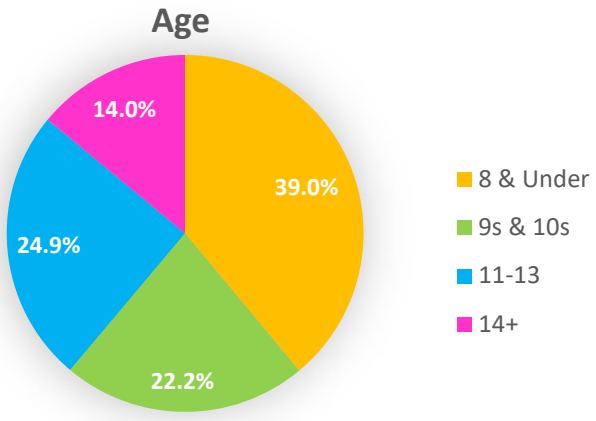
Council funding also enables us to employ many of our NYJTL alumni, high school seniors and college students, as coaches and assistant coaches at various times throughout all four seasons (spring, summer, fall and winter). In effect, we run our own Student Youth Employment Program (SYEP).

NYJTL’s FREE programs take place throughout the year (spring, summer, fall and winter) in schoolyards and public parks throughout the five boroughs. In non-COVID years, through our Community and School Time Tennis Programs, we annually reach over **85,000 young people citywide, in EVERY Council District in the city.**

**The overwhelming majority of the young people served are Black, Latino and Asian populations - with registration for each group at approximately 25%.** 2 out of every 3 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.

**NYJTL Community Tennis Program Demographics[1]**



| 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 85,000 youth traditionally reached YJTL*

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 develop life skills of perseverance, cooperation, fairness, respect and many more through the values learned by playing tennis.

Studies have proven that the sport of tennis offers young people numerous physical and psychological developmental benefits. **Regular tennis play has been demonstrated to improve a youngster's development the following areas (including but not limited to)**:

| Physical Fitness | Psychological Development |
|---|---|
| **Aerobic & Cardiovascular Fitness** | **Discipline** |
| **Anaerobic Fitness** | **Sportsmanship** |
| **General Body Coordination** | **Teamwork** |
| **Bone Strength & Density** | **Social Skills** |
| **Hand-eye Coordination** | **Resiliency** |

Last summer when COVID-19 restrictions began to loosen, we correctly predicted that young people would be leaving their homes by the droves in search of fresh air, sunshine, social interaction, and something to do. **Due to the nature of the sport of tennis, NYJTL was uniquely positioned to provide these youth with a SAFE and FUN physical outlet to help relieve the stress and anxiety that had developed during the city's initial period of remote learning and social isolation.** We easily adapted our Community Tennis Program, funded under the Council's Physical Education and Fitness Initiative, and our coaches were out on the courts as soon as we were able. **Our in-person programming has continued since last summer uninterrupted and without any reported incidents.**

We attribute our good fortune and 0% of transmission to our self-imposed extremely rigorous safety protocols including increasing the number of NYJTL staff at each of our program sites and abundance of PPEs. **Tennis, as the Governor indicated last year, is one of the few outdoor, low-risk activities available to New Yorkers as we continue to navigate COVID-19. NYJTL's youth tennis program continues to be distinctly equipped to provide youngsters with safe, fun and engaging physical activity this summer and beyond.**

**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.

On behalf of the youngsters and parents annually served by NYJTL, I thank you for the Council's commitment to the youth of our city and for your sustained support of NYJTL.

**Testimony by the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)**

**Before the Finance Committee regarding:**

**Final Budget Hearing**

**May 25, 2021**

Chair Dromm, Council Members, and staff, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Finance Committee about the FY22 budget. My name is Beth Goldman, and I am the President & Attorney-in-Charge of the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG). NYLAG uses the power of the law to help New Yorkers in need combat social, racial, and economic injustice. We address emerging and urgent legal needs with comprehensive, free civil legal services, impact litigation, policy advocacy, and community education. NYLAG serves immigrants, seniors, the homebound, families facing foreclosure, renters facing eviction, low-income consumers, those in need of government assistance, children in need of special education, domestic violence victims, persons with disabilities, patients with chronic illness or disease, low-wage workers, low-income members of the LGBTQ community, Holocaust survivors, veterans, as well as others in need of free legal services.

**Commitment to Civil Legal Services in the Face of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

It's been a challenging 15 months for NYC, and especially for the clients we serve. We, as legal service providers, have had to adapt and respond to the emerging needs of those grappling with the devastation wrought by the pandemic. The demand for NYLAG's services continues to grow, and demand will only increase further as courts reopen and moratoria end. Legal services will be absolutely critical to the recovery of New York City as the economic fallout from the pandemic continues to affect New Yorkers experiencing poverty.

The City of New York has made a deep and ongoing commitment to funding for civil legal services. New York City is like no other city in its recognition of the need and support for making legal services available to those who would otherwise not be able to afford an attorney when facing crisis. We saw during this past year how critical and relevant that commitment is given the increase in the number of New Yorkers experiencing poverty who are facing unprecedented civil legal issues. Now is the time to recommit resources to legal services to give those struggling in our City a fighting chance.

I will outline the work we have done so far in response to the pandemic and then turn to what we expect to see in the coming months and years.

**Legal Services Provided in Response to COVID-19**

COVID changed everything about our work. First, our existing clients faced new issues as the pandemic exacerbated the challenges they already faced. Second, we had new clients – those who had not previously been eligible for NYLAG services. Third, our clients could not access services in the same way they had previously as work had gone remote. Thus, we needed to adapt our intake practices, our service delivery model, and the substantive work that we performed – and we did.

Our approach to intake shifted to ensure that we screened clients with a focus on wrap around services, because clients were not presenting with just one issue. The goal was to quickly capture the multiple issues that may result from a crisis event and address all of them. We also invested in technology to allow for online intake – a new approach that improved efficiency so that we could quickly start addressing the needs of new clients and new cases.

As to the work itself, our Employment Law Project, for example, which is funded by Low Wage Worker Support, pivoted from primarily handling employment discrimination and wage claims to handling the huge volume of unemployment insurance matters that arose this year. With the number of unemployed New Yorkers increasing by hundreds of thousands, NYLAG was flooded with calls from New Yorkers desperate to access UI benefits and newly available expanded and supplemental benefits including Pandemic Assistance Unemployment benefits. To maximize the number of people we could assist, we trained pro bono volunteers to represent claimants before the NYS Department of Labor to challenge wrongful denial of benefits. It is thanks to the Low Wage Worker funding from the City that our project was able to handle 17 times as many unemployment cases than we did in the prior year. Employment law is an area traditionally severely underfunded, but the funding provided by the City turned out to be exceptionally important during the pandemic. NYLAG applauds the City for identifying and working to fill this gap in services, and we urge the City to continue this critical funding.

Of course, a major need for legal services arises in housing cases. NYLAG is proud to be a part of the expanding Universal Access to Counsel in Housing Court (Right to Counsel) program run by HRA's Office of Civil Justice. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, NYLAG continues to partner closely with HRA and the Right to Counsel program to provide essential services to low-income tenants. We are working in rotation with other providers to answer emergency calls and advise on issues surrounding the eviction moratorium as part of the City's housing hotline. In addition to addressing hotline generated issues, our lawyers are handling Housing Court emergencies, including illegal lockout cases, assisting tenants with hardship declarations consistent with the protections built into the COVID-19 Emergency Eviction and Foreclosure Prevention Action ("EEFPA"), and handling a rising tide of new

nuisance cases as landlords try to use that loophole in the EEFPA to remove people from their homes. Our attorneys will be there when the moratorium ends and the onslaught of eviction cases begin ready to fight to keep people in their homes.

In addition to the above, we modified our practice in myriad ways, some of which are listed below, all of which remain active:

- **NYLAG established two hotlines for those affected by COVID-19.** The first hotline, the NY COVID-19 Legal Resource Hotline went live on April 20, 2020, to assist New York City residents impacted by COVID-19 with their legal needs. The second hotline was established for NYLAG's 36 medical partners to refer patients who have legal issues affecting their health outcomes. Together, we received over 8,100 calls. Hotline callers are able to seek assistance regarding any legal question they may face as a result of COVID-19 including: the need for advance planning documents, consumer debt relief, domestic violence issues, employee rights, family and medical leave, foreclosure, immigration, public benefits, shelter advocacy, special education, stimulus payment questions, tenants' rights, and unemployment insurance.
- **NYLAG created an online COVID-19 resource center.** Our website at nylag.org/covid19 has up-to-date information on court procedures, new policies, and information about COVID related benefits. The page has had more than 31,000 views since its inception and hosts a number of original resources on evictions, workers' rights, long-term legal planning, and financial counseling advice. NYLAG also utilized Facebook Live Events to host Q&As for the community on housing issues, immigration, public benefits, domestic violence, and more. This resulted in nearly 21,000 views collectively.

- **NYLAG expanded services for domestic violence survivors and their children with emergency cases.** After NY went into lockdown, the family courts were open only for matters deemed "essential," such as abuse/neglect filings or orders to keep abusive partners or family members away. The courts were largely inaccessible, however, to individuals trying to navigate the system on their own because of language and technology barriers, as well as the absence of court staff to assist during the pandemic. NYLAG stepped in to draft Orders of Protection, and we have helped over 600 individuals with family offense matters, including individualized safety planning, and filing of family offense petitions where the person indicated it would be safe to do so. To build capacity for this urgent and growing need, NYLAG, once again, trained pro bono volunteers and law students draft, and file family offense petition to reach more survivors.
- **NYLAG served veterans hard hit by the pandemic.** The pandemic exacerbated the life-threatening economic and mental health challenged faced by New York's veterans. They faced extended unemployment,[1] months of rent non-payment, and inability to seek proper medical care due to cancelled and rescheduled appointments.[2] NYLAG assisted with advocacy in connection with veterans' benefits, housing, public benefits, consumer protection, and advance planning, among other issues.
- **NYLAG advocated on behalf of people experiencing homelessness.** With our partners, we pushed the NYC Department of Homeless Services to create isolation beds for shelter

[1] Veteran unemployment rose from 3.1% in 2019 to as high as 14.7% in 2020. Leo Shane, *Veterans unemployment up in November as national jobless rate falls,* Military Times, 4 Dec 2020, https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2020/12/04/veterans-unemployment-up-in-november-as-national-jobless-rate-falls/#:~:text=The%20unemployment%20rate%20among%20all,who%20are%20able%20to%20work.

[2] From March 16, 2020 through May 1, 2020 alone 7.3 million appointments were cancelled. An additional 4 million appointments were cancelled through June 15, 2020. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General, *Appointment Management During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, (Sep 2020), https://www.va.gov/oig/pubs/VAOIG-20-02794-218.pdf.

residents who were exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms so their safety and for the safety of the general shelter population; relax eligibility standards for homeless families so that every family who applied for shelter received a temporary placement; change the family shelter application process to allow children not to have to appear in person to apply for shelter; proactively move elderly and immunocompromised shelter residents out of congregate settings; and expand the days and hours that hospitals could discharge patients to DHS so that healthy non-COVID-19 patients could leave the hospital and not catch COVID-19.

- **NYLAG advocated for release of immigrants in ICE detention who are infected with COVID-19 or have medical vulnerabilities.** NYLAG undertook rigorous advocacy efforts, and enlisted pro bono counsel to assist, in seeking release of detained immigrants with COVID-19 or at risk because of medical vulnerabilities, including by filing habeas petitions in courts in New York and New Jersey and other emergency applications.
- **NYLAG stepped in to advocate for children with special needs during school closures.** Navigating the school system during the pandemic has been an onerous task for all families, but particularly those with children receiving special education services. Over the last year, we have assisted our clients by (1) ensuring that, on the most basic level, children have devices needed to access remote learning; (2) advocating for children to receive all the special education services mandated on their IEPs; and (3) filing due process complaints if a child is not receiving the free appropriate public education guaranteed under federal and New York State law.

These are examples of some of the ways we adjusted our practice to address the unique challenges COVID-19 presented. Our ability to shift gears in the face of changing circumstances

is due in large part to the funding we receive from the City Council. Flexible funding such as the Council funding for Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers has been essential to our ability to respond to crisis and pivot to new work as needed. We are grateful for this support and urge the Council to continue to fund this important source of funding.

**Legal Services to Support the Recovery of NYC**

The effects of COVID-19 have been devastating for our clients, many of whom people of color. Poverty in New York City has been growing at record rates and unemployment levels are staggering, with more than 700,000 New Yorkers still

unemployed.[3] COVID-19 has only exacerbated the racial and wealth gap, with the people of color experiencing income loss with much greater frequency than White residents.[4] Experts suggest that NYC's economy will take years to recover, and jobs held by low-wage workers and people of color will take the longest to return.

The recovery will require legal services on the front lines to ensure that people do not hungry, are safe in their homes, and are free from violence. Legal services will be necessary to ensure that people of color have access to justice and are not left behind as the City opens up. An equitable recovery will require funding for:

- **Special Education Attorneys** to address the needs of the students who face tremendous obstacles accessing the classes, related services, assistive technologies, and evaluations that they need to learn and grow.

[3] NYS Dept. of Labor, March 16, 2021, https://labor.ny.gov/stats/pressreleases/pruistat.shtm#:~:text=New%20York%20City's%20unemployment%20rate,to%20816%2C700%20in%20January%202021

[4] Uneven Impact: What Job Loss During COVID-19 Means for New Yorkers Now and in the Future, NYC Dept of Consumer and Worker Protection, December 2020, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dca/downloads/pdf/partners/Uneven_Impact.pdf

- **Public benefit attorneys** to ensure that those facing food or shelter insecurity obtain food stamps, social security, shelter, and other benefits necessary for survival;
- **Housing attorneys** to address the avalanche of cases once the eviction moratorium ends so as to prevent families from being evicted from their homes;
- **Family law attorneys** to assist the swell of domestic violence survivors who need protection from abusive partners and have not been able to secure protection during the lockdown;
- **Foreclosure lawyers** to keep people in their homes as the moratoria are lifted and banks can once again seek to foreclose;
- **Immigration lawyers** to protect individuals from deportation and to reunify families;
- **Employment attorneys** to assist the unemployed obtain benefits and low wage workers obtain the wages and protections to which they are entitled;
- **Consumer lawyers** to handle the onslaught of cases by debt collectors seeking to recovery from our clients;
- **Elder attorneys** to ensure the elderly are safe and can age in place with dignity and access healthcare, housing, and other essential needs.
- **Veterans attorneys** to assist veterans who need and deserve legal advocates with the expertise to help them navigate their legal issues and maximize the unique benefits they are entitled to so they can get back on their feet.

To that end, NYLAG has requested funding from the Council as follows:

- **$900,000 in Legal Services for Low-Income New Yorkers Funding** to support NYLAG's COVID-relief efforts, including NYLAG's hotlines, resource centers, and legal services such as government benefits, family law, home care, veterans' benefits, employment rights, consumer protection, special education, and LGBTQ rights.

- **$200,000 in Legal Services for Veterans Funding** to help veterans hard hit by COVID access the legal services they need to achieve economic security, including assistance with veterans' benefits, housing, public benefits, consumer protection**,** and advance planning.
- **$325,000 in Immigrant Health Initiative Funding** to assist Low-income undocumented patients in H+H hospitals in obtaining immigration and other legal services that will help them access healthcare options, such as Medicaid.
- **$475,000 Immigrant Opportunities Initiative Funding** to support's NYLAG's comprehensive immigration practice covering naturalization, adjustment of status, relative petitions, U & T Visas and VAWA self-petitions for DV and trafficking victims, SIJS, removal defense, and more – all of which have been complicated by quarantine orders.
- **$30,000 NYC Tax Lien Sale Outreach and Technical Support** to work alongside other members of The Coalition for Affordable Homes members to help New Yorkers dealing with tax liens on their property stay in their homes.
- **Discretionary Funding for Mobile Legal Help Center** to support NYLAG's MLHC team which pivoted to providing online presentations with councilmembers and providing in-kind support for the COVID-19 hotline. The van will return to the road shortly.
- **District Allocation of DoVE Funding** to support the increased need since the pandemic for NYLAG's representation of domestic violence victims in complex contested divorces, ancillary divorce issues (equitable distribution and maintenance), child/spousal support, custody/visitation, orders of protection, paternity, adoption, child protection, and immigration relief for DV victims.

New York City is like no other city in its recognition of the need and support for making available legal services to those who would otherwise afford an attorney when facing crisis. This year, that commitment is more important than ever, as every facet of society is challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic and New Yorkers experiencing poverty are facing unprecedented civil legal issues. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to a strong continued partnership with the Council and the Mayor's Office to work towards the recovery of our City through access to justice for those in need.

Respectfully submitted,

New York Legal Assistance Group

opportunities for a better tomorrow

**New York City Council Committee on Finance**
**May 25, 2021 at 10:00 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 crisis facing New York City's young adults and the opportunities we must act on now to support them.

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.

## OBT Participants

For nearly 40 years, OBT has served young people and adults who face systemic barriers to economic stability. Our participants often struggle with familial poverty, health and mental health issues, and food insecurity. Many are from immigrant, Black, and Brown communities and face the structural racism that those identities engender every day. Our mission has always been to mitigate the inherent inequity in our economic ecosystem through supportive and comprehensive job training and education programs. When students come to us for their High School Equivalency diploma or a job training, they leave with mentors, friends, confidence, and renewed energy towards a vocation in life.

Before COVID-19 brought our City's businesses to a halt, fueled mass layoffs, and threw our health and mental health support systems into flux, this work was challenging. For the reasons discussed above, our participants faced an often uphill battle to secure family-sustaining employment.

Now, this work is all the more challenging and urgent. With increased competition for jobs, young people are at a disadvantage in finding employment, facing an even steeper climb towards economic stability and mobility.

## Young People are in Crisis

Despite the resilience and hard work of organizations like OBT, New York City's young people are in crisis. **Since the pandemic hit New York City, the number of out of school and out of work young adults has more than doubled.** For health, familial, economic reasons, or a combination of the three, young adults had to drop out of school or leave or be laid off from their jobs. The most recent research estimates that there are now between 257,000 and 310,000 young adults that fit this criterion now - compared to 110,000 in 2019. There have been times in the City when this population has been high - but there has never been a moment like this, when so much is stacked against young adults. Competition for jobs and shifted requirements to get hired and succeed in new and growing sectors are just some of what our participants and graduates are facing.

Young adults have borne the brunt of the economic fallout from the pandemic. The research is clear - **young workers were 34% more likely to lose their jobs**. Workers with a high school diploma or less were 12% more likely to be laid off. There are many reasons that this is the case. A significant reason is that young people represented the majority of workers in sectors that were particularly vulnerable to the pandemic's shutdown - notably, retail and hospitality. A majority of these jobs are projected to not return.

## OBT's Vision for FY22

Before COVID, connecting the resilient young people we serve to living wage work was often challenging - but now, with tens of thousands more young people disconnected from employment and education, with sectors like retail and hospitality - which used to provide first time work experience - shrinking, with increased competition for jobs and new requirements for jobs coming online in new sectors - the work is even more important.

**OBT's job training and education programs and employment placement services have taken on a new urgency in light of this crisis. And we need more support to be able to meet the needs of the newly unemployed and disconnected.** As we plan for the coming year, OBT is focused in three areas:

*Expand training programs in high growth sectors, focusing on employable skills:* Expanding sector-based advanced programs in healthcare and technology, where well-paying job opportunities continue to grow. These programs offer a critical next step for those who earn their high school diploma to build experience in paid internships, network with employers, and hone their skills.

- OBT's Medical Administrative Assistant Program has seen a **200% increase in applications**. We are hoping to expand this program to meet the need.
- OBT's Cloud Support Engineering Program is excited to announce two new components that will make carving a career pathway easier for young adults.

    - First, we're building a Bridge Program into the course so that the program is more accessible to those with little experience or who have been out of school for a significant amount of time.
    - Second, graduates of the program can now earn 12+ credits at CUNY School of Professional Studies - a semester for free!

*Supporting Students with Work-Based Learning and Wraparound Supports as they work towards their High School Equivalency:* A High School diploma remains the gatekeeper to living wage and stable employment. OBT's programs provide professional development, the opportunity to earn certifications, paid internship experiences, and individual case management that helps young people and adults build career pathways. In addition to adding seats to our Youth High School Equivalency Program, we want to support more New Yorkers in achieving their HSEs.

- Spanish-speaking adults expressed a desire to earn their High School Equivalency Diplomas. We are hoping to meet this demand by launching an Adult Spanish High School Equivalency Program that will help them to take their next steps.

*Building Digital Literacy into Every Educational and Workforce Programming:* Digital literacy and basic technological skills are essential for all workers. The transition to remote has only further demonstrated the need to address the digital divide through city-wide broadband access and organization-wide initiatives, like ensuring that all ESOL and High School Equivalency classes include digital literacy.

## Workforce Development as a Vehicle for Equitable Economic Relief - And A Way to Mitigate the Crisis Facing NYC's Young Adults

Job training, education programs and employment placement services will continue to be essential resources to disenfranchised young people, adults struggling with the digital divide, and speakers of other languages. Supporting these services demonstrates a commitment to an equitable economic recovery.

As the City navigates economic recovery, we must center those who have borne the brunt of the economic fallout - young adults. The programs we are proud to provide are lifelines to our participants as they work to survive in the economic landscape that we're facing. OBT and other workforce organizations need your support in this budget so that we can continue to help New Yorkers achieve economic mobility.

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

opportunities for a better tomorrow

**New York City Council Committee on Finance**
**May 25, 2021 at 10:00 am**

Testimony of Dr. Liliana Polo-Mckenna, Chief Executive Officer
Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT)

Good morning. My name is Liliana Polo-Mckenna and I am the Chief Executive Officer 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 crisis facing New York City's young adults and the opportunities we must act on now to support them.

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.

**OBT During the Spread of COVID-19**
COVID-19 has taken an incredible toll on our city. It has also had a disproportionate impact, and has been particularly devastating in low-income, Black and Brown communities. These are the very communities that OBT has served for decades. This disproportionate impact was felt in both lives and livelihoods, with economic difficulties hitting these communities hardest as well.

As we are rooted in the communities most impacted, we knew our services would be more critical than ever. There was no lapse in OBT's programming; we shifted to remote programming, literally overnight. We navigated the technical issues, ensuring all students had access to the internet and had devices to attend class on. For over a year, OBT students have continued earning High School Equivalency diplomas, gaining certifications, networking with potential employers, and working in paid internships - all remotely and all during a time of incredible stress and uncertainty. We are extremely proud.

Some of what has facilitated this success is our team's commitment to meeting our participants' needs outside the classroom. OBT teams also picked up the mantle to support individuals with needs around food, diapers, everyday essentials, and keeping safe in the midst of this pandemic. We fundraised for an Emergency Fund that gave out over $66,000 to nearly 300 individuals and families in 2020. We are humbled to have been a lifeline for our participants and alumni.

**Young People are in Crisis**

Despite the resilience and hard work of organizations like OBT, New York City's young people are in crisis. **Since the pandemic hit New York City, the number of out of school and out of work young adults has more than doubled.** For health, familial, economic reasons, or a combination of the three, young adults had to drop out of school or leave or be laid off from their jobs. The most recent research estimates that there are now between 257,000 and 310,000 young adults that fit this criterion now - compared to 110,000 in 2019. There have been times in the City when this population has been high - but there has never been a moment like this, when so much is stacked against young adults. Competition for jobs and shifted requirements to get hired and succeed in new and growing sectors are just some of what our participants and graduates are facing.

Young adults have borne the brunt of the economic fallout from the pandemic. The research is clear - **young workers were 34% more likely to lose their jobs**. Workers with a high school diploma or less were 12% more likely to be laid off. There are many reasons that this is the case. A significant reason is that young people represented the majority of workers in sectors that were particularly vulnerable to the pandemic's shutdown - notably, retail and hospitality. A majority of these jobs are projected to not return.

**How We Must Support Young Adults NOW**

There are actions we can take right now to support young people facing increased competition for a shrinking number of employment opportunities. Organizations like OBT have been navigating these waters for decades. And over the past year, we and other workforce development nonprofits and advocacy organizations have put forth concrete solutions that can mitigate this crisis. Below, we outline some of the short and long term ways to address young people's needs and build NYC's economy back.

Short Term: Support What Works

- **Expand training programs in high growth sectors**, like tech, healthcare, and the green economy. We know where opportunities will be; we need the funding to innovate training programs alongside employers that can upskill New Yorkers into them.
- **Expanding bridge programming**, so that advanced training programs in high growth sectors are accessible to New Yorkers who are struggling. Bridge programming prepares an individual to succeed in more advanced training programs, this includes contextualized high school equivalency programming and a focus on digital literacy.
- **Support paid Work-Based Learning (WBL) opportunities**. Again and again, the research shows that internships and apprenticeships help young people not only build technical skills, but also learn the essential skills of how to navigate a workplace. Further, they're able to augment their professional networks - which we all know is critical to getting hired.

- **Ensure all programming includes wraparound supports**. We cannot underscore this enough. None of these programs work if participants do not receive support for mental health support, food stipends, childcare vouchers, and transportation. This not only keep students engaged, but they make the difference between being able to participate - and improve their education - or not.

Long Term: Capitalize on System-wide Opportunities
Our solutions for NYC's young people must be sustainable. Yes, we must support workforce development programs urgently now, but we also must attend to the systems change that will make this support longlasting. If the City isn't paying attention to how workforce stakeholders - post-secondary institutions, employers, nonprofits, high schools - are working together to build pathways for young adults, we're missing a critical opportunity to solve these seemingly intractable challenges.

We're advocating for strengthening the connections between high schools and workforce training providers, and between workforce training providers and colleges. At OBT, our participants remind us that life isn't linear. Building a career path isn't either. A student may earn their high school diploma and go straight to getting their Bachelor's degree. Or they may enroll in a job training program that prepares them for work. In a few years, they may realize that a college degree will propel them in their field and matriculate in college. We need to recognize the varied paths that young adults take towards economic mobility. Then, we need to invest in making their navigation along their path seamless and supported.

New York City's young adults are in crisis. **With more than double the young people out of school and out of work than pre-pandemic, we need bold investments to get them on track to employment that pays a living wage - and allows them to achieve their dreams.** It is our hope and our expectation that the City Council and the Administration reflects its values of equity and racial, social, and economic justice in a budget that places youth, immigrants, and those who have borne the brunt of the economic hardship of this pandemic at the center. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. With any questions, I can be reached at lpolo@obtjobs.org.

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Ming Cho Lee (in memoriam)

May 24, 2021

Dear City Council Members,

PAN ASIAN REPERTORY THEATRE, now in our 44th Milestone Season, has been at the forefront to promote EQUALITY and ACCESS in the theatre, engaging diverse communities from the full spectrum of th**e pan-Asian diaspora** with Off-Broadway Productions, Tours, Training Programs and Educational Outreach/Community Service. Since 1977 Founder Tisa Chang continues to provide opportunities to promote stories seldom told that reflect the evolution of Asians in America on themes of social justice.

In the wake of **anti-Asian hate crimes,** the challenge to sustain PAN ASIAN REP's mission and advocacy is ever more urgent. Our goal today is to seek your meaningful support to continue **proactive service and programs** consistent with Pan Asian's distinctive accomplishments and legacy.

We are proud to be a part of the founding veteran core of the Coalition of Theaters of Color (CTC).

All best,



Tisa Chang
Founding Artistic Director

# THE PARTNERSHIP FOR THE HOMELESS

**The Partnership for the Homeless & the New York City Council**
**Rental Assistance/Eviction Prevention Funding Request**

**Request:** The Partnership is requesting $160,000 to expand our current eviction prevention services, which include financial assistance, landlord mediation, legal services and tenant education and advocacy. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we've increased our support for tenants with emergency financial assistance to generate immediate safety for our families and help cover rent and utility arrears that have been building since the shutdown in March 2020.

**Program Overview & Increasing Need:** When the COVID-19 related shutdown began, The Partnership launched its COVID-19 rental assistance efforts immediately. We knew that a shutdown of this magnitude would require a large-scale eviction prevention effort; otherwise, lost jobs, long-term illness and a high death rate would lead to a domino effect resulting in massive evictions the likes of which our city has not seen.

Early on, it became clear that the pandemic was having a disproportionate impact on individuals represented among our client base – Black and Latinx communities, low-wage workers and people spending at least 30%-50% of their income on housing. The NYS eviction moratorium, without true rent assistance, is only a stopgap measure for renters.

Through our program, we intervene to help clients reach zero rental arrears in three primary ways: (1) offer emergency assistance for rent and utility arrears, (2) conduct comprehensive benefits analysis and connect clients to all available supports through government and community partners and (3) initiate intensive landlord mediation to negotiate a reduction in the amount owed and to alert landlords that clients have advocates working to keep them safely housed.

There is no better ROI than eviction prevention. The roughly $68,000 it costs to keep a family with children in the shelter system is more than 3x the cost of keeping a family in their apartment with a monthly rent of $1,700, or $20,000 annually. It is the solution that keeps individuals and families in their homes, saves lives, and reduces costs. It provides not just immediate relief, but also sets our clients up for long-term success and stability. The Partnership's financial assistance and mediation make families 76% more likely to remain housed long-term. Through our work to keep families in their homes, we are not only maximizing each dollar, but also we are giving families the best chance at lasting stabilization.

**Our Clients:** We support households through this program whose incomes fall below 50% of area median income (AMI), with more than three-quarters of our clients living on incomes that fall below 30% of AMI.

# THE PARTNERSHIP FOR THE HOMELESS

We serve communities – such as Hunts Point, Mott Haven, Brownsville and East New York – with the highest rates of poverty, homelessness, unemployment and health disparities. Our clients are among the most vulnerable, including LGBTQIA+ people, those living with HIV and AIDS, the elderly, undocumented families, those who have experienced domestic violence, and those living with a range of medical and mental health concerns. In the communities we serve, 80% of households that are severely rent burdened are also extremely low income or very low-income. Up to 45% of residents spent over 50% of their annual income on rent (compared to 27% in all of NYC). In a recent community survey, 75% of households in some of the city's poorest neighborhoods reported having $1,000 or less in savings. Of those households, 33% reported $0 in savings.

Another key demographic that we have been working with throughout the pandemic are undocumented renters. We have seen increased requests from undocumented clients, particularly those who have received no assistance from various stimulus packages – including the one-time federal payments, unemployment benefits, and NY State's Rental Assistance Program. As a result, undocumented clients present with higher arrears, and report that they are experiencing greater pressure and harassment from landlords. Our landlord mediation efforts have been particularly effective for these clients.

**Projected Impact:** With the support of the NYC Council and other funders, The Partnership will be able to provide assistance to approximately 700 households (approximately 1,750 New Yorkers) across the five boroughs. The average assistance amount needed for each household has nearly doubled from this time last year - and clients' arrears are increasing each month, their benefits are running out, and many still remain out of work and/or are ineligible for various stimulus supports or assistance from other organizations. The 160K additional funding from City Council will help us to target the most vulnerable renters and offer assistance to help build a bridge to keep families afloat and help landlords - who are themselves struggling to collect rent - to keep their buildings.

**Additional Impact: Ecosystem of Small Landlords** Our work has focused on New York City as an ecosystem. When renters are able to pay down their arrears, it benefits them and their families directly – and it also benefits the landlords (especially small landlords) who depend on their rents to pay their mortgages and maintain their buildings. If the real estate ecosystem is healthy, New York City as a whole is healthy. Our program provides funds quickly to landlords - who are themselves often struggling to collect rent and pay bills - allowing them to retain and maintain their buildings.

**FY20 Impact:** In FY20, more than 50,000 New Yorkers were reached by The Partnership's housing, crisis and emergency services, and health and education programs. By creating partnerships with every sector — philanthropy, business, government, nonprofits and the arts — we have generated substantial impact: 8,000 New Yorkers received housing and emergency services to stave off evictions and secure their existing homes; 6,500 New Yorkers received ongoing stabilizing clinical casework and mental health and emotional wellbeing interventions; 40,000+ children and parents in the family shelter system benefitted from our schools access advocacy, and 35,000 meals were provided to families in need.



May 25, 2021

Dear Council Members and Colleagues,

On behalf of the artists, staff, Board, and larger community of Performance Space New York, we would like to express our thanks for the critical funding that we've received from the Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York City Council.

NYC's cultural community, and those it employs and serves, continues to grapple with the economic losses of the pandemic. There is no recovery without the arts, and we need to invest in this community in an equitable way that reaches the people, programs, and organizations who can lead the sector and the City forward. Please expand funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs, carve out funding specifically for BIPOC serving organizations, and establish new funding streams that can be accessed by individual artists.

Artists are in trouble. Performance Space supports the Cultural Solidarity Fund (CSF). Managed by the Indie Theatre Fund, CSF gives out micro grants of $500 to cultural workers in need. The fund has received thousands of applications, almost entirely from artists. Some were homeless at the time of their application or extremely behind on their rent. Some sent the money back because they found a job. Some said the grant made them feel less invisible and gave them the strength to keep going. As of now, the fund has made 530 grants and expects to reach 1,000 by the end of the summer, but there should be a better way. The need is great, and we are feeling very small. We need help.

We are asking for the creation of an artist registry that would enable individual artists to apply directly to DCLA or to another Government body for individual funding, like what has been enacted in San Francisco and other cities. Artists and cultural workers - including independent, gig, and mixed income earners - empower every aspect of the cultural sector and must have access to direct support, living wages from employers and affordable workspaces.

Sadly, many artists and cultural workers are without health insurance. Even union workers, who normally have coverage, lost their insurance because they were unable to meet the minimum number of working hours in 2020. Could there be a city-wide insurance plan for cultural workers, an extension of the city insurance offered by CIGs? Could other recipients of DCLA funding get on the CIG insurance as a way to give more cultural workers benefits? This is a time for big, bold ideas. In the wake of the pandemic, we need to better support our cultural workers.

It also bears repeating that any organization receiving City funding should be providing wages for artists and cultural workers that are based on current livable wage standards and wages should be equitably distributed across race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age and disability, immigration status, language, and nationality. There should be no exceptions whatsoever, no excuses. Unpaid internships and fellowships should be deeply questioned and maybe disallowed as they perpetuate inequality.

Performance Space New York supports many artists and strives to provide life-affirming fees and opportunities but, artists need a variety of funding options. Let's find creative ways to facilitate more funding streams for individual artists, so they/we are not so reliant on institutions and can operate with greater autonomy and dignity. Maybe we can imagine a future where we don't need the Cultural Solidarity Fund, where living and working as an artist is a viable and humane option for those who give us so much.

Thank you so much for reading this testimony and feel free to reach out with any questions.

In Solidarity,



Jenny Schlenzka, Executive Artistic Director

With,

Pati Hertling, Deputy Director
Denise Poché-Jetter, Program Director
Paula Bennett, Institutional Giving Manager
Yolene Grant, Communications and Marketing Manager
Ana Beatriz Sepúlveda, Head of Community Access and Inclusion
Andy Sowers, Production Manager

**NYC Finance Committee Executive Budget Hearing**
**May 25, 2021**

My name is Eva Kornacka and I am the Executive Director at Polonians Organized to Minister to Our Community, Inc. (POMOC), a 501 (C) (3) non-profit with a mission is to improve the quality of life for those in need, particularly immigrant families and seniors.
For over forty years our organization has been a direct service provider in areas of public benefit entitlements, managed healthcare assistance, immigration assistance, senior services and employment assistance.

POMOC serves approximately 3,500 clients annually, our target population are low-income immigrants predominately from Poland and other Eastern European countries. Many of them have very limited or no English language skills, making them severely disadvantaged due to lack of information and communication barriers. POMOC is the only ethnic non-profit organization in Queens that welcomes all, regardless of age, residence and immigration status.

Our NYC Access Health and MCCAP programs assist clients seeking all types of health coverage: government programs, coverage through the New York State Marketplace and individual plans. Because of limited resources, lack of information on how to access the healthcare system and get the care they need, as well as a language barrier, our clients face difficulties in navigating the healthcare system.
Our bilingual staff, including a Certified Application Counselor, helps them find options for medical care, including access to free or low-cost coverage.

POMOC provides enrollment, access to care, coverage navigation, social support and other healthcare assistance, as well as educational outreach.
We conduct health literacy presentations and workshops in the community, prescreen our clients for eligibility, help them manage their care by arranging appointments and translating correspondence from their plans and assisting with bills and negotiating medical payments.
The one-on-one assistance they receive at our agency, in their own native language and culturally sensitive environment, enables them to understand and navigate the complexity of health insurance regulations.

During the ongoing pandemic POMOC has resumed in-person services as of June 2020. With keeping all necessary safety precautions, our staff is once again assisting clients one-on-one with urgent issues regarding new and renewal applications for health insurance programs, other crucial benefits like SNAP, unemployment insurance benefits, and other matters which cannot be handled remotely.

Assisting our clients with these problems is a task, there are hours spent on the phone with government agencies such as the Human Resources Administration. Once a representative is available our job is to present the issue, translate for the person requesting the assistance, and most of all advocate on their behalf. It takes our staff's knowledge of the current regulations to deliver the substance of the case.
Without our navigation and guidance through the complexity of the application process for health insurance coverage, immigrant clients with limited language skills are helpless on their own. The common argument often heard is that there is a language line with interpretation for those who need it. This service is very helpful, but such assistance will never replace a case manager/client advocate since most people do not fully understand the regulations and are not equipped to apply them to their individual situation.

The New York City Council Access Health and MCCAP Initiatives are crucial in supporting such services and provide our communities with knowledge and tools to access healthcare and stay healthy. This funding provides critical resources which increase the capacity of trusted community-based organizations in educating and assisting the diverse communities they serve about health access, coverage and available programs.

On behalf of our vulnerable populations, we urge the New York City Council to continue supporting our non-profits through these important initiatives. It is in the best interest of all New Yorkers that these programs continue and hopefully expand in the difficult post COVID times ahead, which will require us all to assist a growing number of residents in need of healthcare assistance.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our testimony.

Prospect Park Alliance
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prospectpark.org

**Testimony of Susan M Donoghue, President, Prospect Park Alliance**
**New York City Council Committee on Finance Hearing**
**May 25, 2021**

I am Sue Donoghue, President of Prospect Park Alliance, the non-profit organization that helps to maintain Prospect Park in partnership with the City. I am here today to support the efforts of the Play Fair campaign to restore cuts to NYC Parks in the upcoming budget.

COVID-19 has made it resoundingly clear that parks and open spaces are essential to the well-being of our communities. Prospect Park is truly "Brooklyn's Backyard," and welcomes more than 10 million visits each year from every zip code in Brooklyn and beyond. As a community park, Prospect Park is a critical gathering space for family reunions, birthday parties and all manner of picnics and barbecues. Its 585 acres provide fresh air and respite to Brooklyn residents, who have the least amount of green space per capita in all of New York City. Making Prospect Park a welcoming and accessible space for the diverse communities of Brooklyn is a key part of our mission, and without the support of the City and our elected officials our work would not be possible.

Visitorship to city parks during the pandemic has increased significantly: in Prospect Park we are seeing a record number of visitors at all hours and all days, along with numerous unpermitted events and gatherings; and a significant uptick in park patrons exploring every inch of the park, including more fragile areas such as the park's woodlands. At the same time, we are experiencing significant budget cuts, and Prospect Park Alliance relies on its partnership with the New York City Parks Department for general maintenance and upkeep of the park.

Historically, the Parks Department budget has been a very small percentage of the city budget, despite the fact that parks comprise a large percentage of city land and are used by a significant portion of the population. Since the pandemic, the Parks Department has experienced $84 million in cuts — about 14 percent of its total annual budget of $587 million — the department has 45 percent less staff to handle more work, translating to 1,700 less maintenance and operation staff and a reduction of 25,000 maintenance hours a week.[1] In Prospect Park, we have seen a 20 percent decrease in NYC Parks staffing, which has been further challenged by fatigue among remaining staff, resulting in an increase in call outs and absences.

The loss of staff, along with a hiring freeze, has been devastating for parks workers trying to cover the 14 percent of NYC land that is under NYC Parks jurisdiction. 2020 parks conditions were the worst on record since NYC Parks began recording them in 2004. The biggest issues were accessibility (parks and comfort station closures), safety, and park conditions (trash, etc.). NYC Parks is chronically underfunded and understaffed: there are not nearly enough City Park Workers, Gardeners, Urban Park Rangers, or PEP officers. 300+ PEP officers are expected to patrol 14% of NYC – in the summers, they're pulled to waterfronts and large parks suffer from overuse and lack of oversight.

[1] New York Times, Trash Piles Up in Parks, Just When New Yorkers Need Them the Most, Aug. 27, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/27/nyregion/nyc-parks-trash.html

NYC cannot replace parks workers with volunteers – NYC needs a fully funded and fully staffed Department of Parks and Recreation. The proposed budget does not return to pre-pandemic levels: staffing levels, the Parks Equity Initiative, and basic maintenance like tree pruning/sidewalk repair/tree stump removal/invasive species control are not addressed. Restoring the NYC Parks budget is the bare minimum. The majority of these positions are not baselined, which means they must be renewed every year by elected officials and do not guarantee parks workers their jobs.

We applaud the City Council for considering the critical need to increase funding for city parks in the upcoming budget cycle, and thank you for recognizing our parks as essential infrastructure by not only restoring budget cuts, but moving beyond a cycle-to-cycle funding model: 1% or more of our city budget must be for parks.

# TESTIMONY OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY
# BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
# HEARING ON THE MAYOR'S EXECUTIVE BUDGET FISCAL YEAR 2022

## MAY 25, 2021


## DR. BARBARA BOWEN, PRESIDENT
## DR. JAMES DAVIS, PRESIDENT-ELECT


Thank you, Chair Dromm and members of the Finance Committee for the opportunity to testify today. We would like to focus on two areas of the Mayor's Executive Budget: restoring funds to CUNY's budget and imploring you to recognize this is the moment to invest in New York City's public higher education system.

**Necessary Restorations**

We are baffled that the Mayor's Executive Budget calls for deep cuts to CUNY. Cutting CUNY at this delicate moment in our city's recovery would be disastrous. There is no lasting economic recovery without a strong and well-funded CUNY system. The Mayor's budget cuts CUNY during a crisis while close to a half-million New Yorkers, including those hardest hit by the pandemic, rely on CUNY for a college degree or further education.

In 2017, a team of economists at Stanford found that "CUNY propels almost six times as many low-income students into the middle class and beyond as all eight Ivy League campuses, plus Duke, M.I.T., Stanford and Chicago, combined." Further, Black and brown New Yorkers, the poor, and the working class, those who have been hit hardest by the pandemic, are exactly the communities for whom CUNY is a lifeline. 83% of CUNY students are people of color and 35% are foreign-born. Half of CUNY students come from households with incomes below $30,000. 64% of CUNY graduates are people of color. Unfortunately, CUNY cannot maximize its benefit to our communities because it suffers from unsustainable, chronic underfunding—and now more cuts are threatened this year.

A crisis is no time to cut an institution that supports the most vulnerable. There are three areas of the CUNY budget that must be restored.

1. **$67 Million to eliminate cuts proposed in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget and maintained in the Mayor's Executive Budget**

a. $1.2 Million proposed cut to Apple Corps

Apple Corps students explore public service, leadership, and justice and equity issues in policing and community relations. The program provides opportunities for service and internships in NYC communities; students participate in anti-racism, implicit bias, safe zone, and mental health support training.

b. $5 Million proposed hiring restrictions

c. $19.6 Million proposed cut - hiring and attrition management
    i. Up to 175 positions eliminated
    ii. Over the past two years, CUNY averaged a loss of 75 staff positions through attrition. Further attrition, and the accompanied hiring freeze, would come at a time when the University will be transitioning back to in-person courses. The reduction would put more pressure on the remaining employees and harm the quality of services, as the University prepares to return in the fall.
    iii. The proposed cut in personnel comes on top of the non-reappointment of 2,000 adjuncts, many at the community colleges. CUNY is already desperately understaffed and over-reliant on part-time employees. Any further reduction will make it nearly impossible to restore course offerings to pre-pandemic levels.

d. $19 Million proposed cut to IT/ Telecom

e. $4 Million proposed cut in OTPS

f. $7.6 Million proposed cut for Fringe Adjustments

g. $8 Million proposed programmatic savings

i. Savings by agency documents show that programmatic savings are cuts to 'non-core' programs such as remediation classes. These were already cut in FY21.

ii. Remediation prepares the most disadvantaged students for college-level course work.

h. $2.9 Million cut to CUNY Tutor Corps

i. Employment in occupations related to STEM—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—is projected to grow steadily and provide high starting salaries. Not all NYC students, however, have equal access to high-quality STEM education. Tutoring has the potential to ameliorate some of the existing inequalities in STEM education and the STEM field.

ii. The CUNY Tutor Corps focuses on Math and Computer Science and brings students from CUNY colleges into middle and high school classrooms, helping them become highly effective tutors and teaching assistants.

iii. Tutor Corps is a partnership between CUNY, the Office of the Mayor, and the New York City Department of Education (DOE).

2. **$3 Million to reinvest in one-time FY21 budget restorations from the Council**
    a. $510 Thousand for childcare.
        i. As CUNY reopens, we must remember that our students cannot come back to campus without viable childcare options. Research shows that more than one in four college students are parents with dependent children, and over 40 percent are the children of single mothers. Childcare is a national crisis. The City must not worsen the struggle for already disadvantaged young parents, especially young mothers of color, who are most likely to have dependent children.
    b. $1 Million for food insecurity programs
        i. Food insecurity has increased since the onset of the pandemic. These funds support food pantry efforts across CUNY's campuses and are still necessary.
    c. $1.7 Million for remediation
        i. 80% of freshman in associate degree programs need at least one remediation course, according to the CUNY Office of Research and Evaluation.
        ii. This program improves academic outcomes through scaling co-requisite Mathematics and English for approximately 9,000 students.

3. **Other programs $24.7 Million:** We agree with other CUNY funding priorities that are critical to CUNY students, faculty and staff that include: the Peter F. Vallone Scholarship ($15.8 million), IOI Citizenship NOW ($3 million), Technology Incubators, ($1.2 million) CUNY Diversity Incubator ($425,000), Veterans Services ($225,000) and programs at various campuses ($4.1).

**<u>The Time for Investment is Now</u>**

We must think strategically about the future of our city and *invest* in CUNY. The future of CUNY is the future of New York. A report by the City Comptroller found that in 2019, CUNY graduates provided more than $4.2 billion in income taxes to New York State. Funding CUNY is literally an investment in New York's economy.

CUNY students have suffered deeply in the pandemic and now is the time for a radical investment in CUNY that cuts against racist austerity; the kind of action that the Mayor and this council have stood up for. CUNY received federal monies to stabilize its budget, not give the Mayor an excuse to cut it. These funds are an opportunity to reimagine a stronger CUNY where students will help lead the city out of the financial crisis created by the pandemic.

1. **$20.4 Million for new investment in a strong public higher education system in New York City - A New Deal for CUNY**

A $20.4M City investment in a New Deal for CUNY would help establish appropriate ratios of mental health counselors and academic advisors to students and promote a high-quality experience for CUNY students. CUNY must hire full-time mental health counselors to meet the International Accreditation of Counseling Services ratio of 1:1,000 counselors per students. CUNY now averages one mental health counselor to 2,700 students.

Quality advising has a documented impact on improving graduation rates, but many departments do not have enough advisors to assist students. The student-to-advisor ratios are as high as 1,500:1 at some CUNY colleges.

2. **Approximately $40 Million, as requested by the CUNY administration, to provide revenue support to offset the loss in tuition from enrollment declines resulting from the pandemic.**
    a. Community college enrollment will rebound; allowing the community colleges to be hamstrung because of a temporary drop in enrollment will leave them unable to serve New Yorkers for many years to come.
    b. The state budget made a commitment to hold CUNY harmless for 98% of pandemic-related enrollment declines. We ask the City to do its part to support CUNY's community colleges as they struggle to help hard-hit students survive the pandemic.

3. **Fulfill CUNY's Capital Budget Request of $21.6 million**

Everything from upgrades to HVAC systems at BMCC, bathroom repairs at Hostos, or ADA compliance across all campuses, the full CUNY capital budget request should be fulfilled to begin addressing decades of deferred maintenance.

Thank you for your commitment to public higher education. It has been a challenging time for our 30,000 members, but we assure you that our commitment to our students and public higher education has only strengthened. PSC will fight for our students and CUNY's mission. But without the support for CUNY outlined above in next year's budget, New York City will not truly recover from the inequalities so clearly exposed by COVID.

Hello and Good Day. My name is Shirley Aubin, and I am the current Co-President of the Queens Highs Presidents' Council, Lunch for Learning Parent Caucus, and parent and community educational advocate and leader.

To increase the participation of school meals which is universally free for all NYC DOE students. Studies show that schools meals are the most nutritious meals serves. We must remove the negative stigma that is associated with school meals. How? Enhance Cafeteria Redesign! The showcase presentation of how the nutritious food is display is key to get students wanting to eat what is being served. Variety and warm welcoming environment will encourage students to eat school meals and stay in the cafeteria. A picture is worth a thousand words! Innovative highly cost. effective model, developed by DOE, that modernizes and transforms the cafeteria experience for students—food court style design which is also known as "Cafeteria Enhancement Experience". A picture is worth a thousand words!




Especially now during the pandemic, many families are going hungry and economically strap. School meals are helping in serving hungry New Yorkers in their communities. Before and after the pandemic, school meals are universally free for NYC DOE students. This is a huge economic benefit whichever way you look at it. The food is tasty and nutritious and there is several food options now. Keeping the parents and students from the

corner store and saving money. The word that school lunch is free has not hit home for parents. Queen Collegiate (6-12 grade) is where my daughter attended her middle school grades and is one of the four high schools in the Jamaica Campus. They underwent an enhanced cafeteria redesign, and everyone loved it. Students' participation has increased and stayed in the cafeteria so they can socialize because the environment friendly and a café / booth style seating arrangement. School staff were also now visiting the cafeteria to get lunch because it was appealing and there were choices. Entering the cafeteria and looking at the redesign and the display of food, it gave me a vibrant vibe and a smile to my face. The social interaction was priceless. The cafeteria is definitely a place where social emotional wellness and growth occurs. Besides giving brain food that they need to be attentive and eager to learn.

Students who eat school lunch:

- Eat healthier than students who bring food from home, regardless of income.
- Perform better in Math and ELA test scores, equivalent to up to 10-weeks of learning.




The pandemic has opened more eyes to the social and economic disparities in our communities around the city. Besides eliminating the digital divide, parents are highly concerned on the social and emotional wellbeing of their students. The "Enhance Cafeteria Experience" helps address the economic and hunger concerns (school meals are free) and the Social Emotional Wellness of our students.

- The "Enhanced Cafeteria Experience has been successful:

- We see a 35% increase in lunch participation among the first set of high schools that got the redesign.
- If all high school received the enhancement, we project 30,000 more high school students would participate.
- More variety on a daily basis, with over 4xs more fruits and vegetables served than in a traditional cafeteria.
- Combat school food stigma and supporting a transition back to school—the redesigned cafeterias will give students sense of safety and security, as they have experienced major trauma.

You can help by providing an additional $150 million for another 300 cafeterias over the next five years. We would like to see all the high schools in Queens, starting with Francis Lewis High School. Followed by the middle schools get the enhanced redesign cafeteria. Then eventually in all schools be upscaled. New look for a new image of school meals!

- Highly cost and time efficient:
  - The cost per school is $500,000 and the construction is done over a weekend.
  - So far, the Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS) has redesigned 34 middle and high school cafeterias across this city.
  - We are asking that $150 million be committed in the capital budget to scale the model up to ½ High schools and ½ middle schools over the next 5 years.

- Marketing / Communication:
  - Ongoing and responsive communication with students, parents, and the community.
  - Advertisement Budget to OFNS (Office of Food Nutrition Services) to sustain positive reinforcement and brand name / recognition.

Commercials that are catchy, makes you smile, dance, cool, modern, and leaving you with good vibes. A Few examples:

1. Grub Hub – makes take out cool, fun, there's variety. Diversified individuals enjoying food that wants to make you boogie. One of our personal favorites. We don't use Grub Hub, but I love that commercial and soon as I hear that music … a smile appears and I'm shaking my body.
2. McDonald's slogan … I'm loving it and golden arches.
3. School House Rock – The classic – How to make a Bill.

OFNS needs to have funds to create innovative, memorable, and positive feeling of wanting to eat school meals. Advertising the enhance cafeteria design and students are enjoying nutritious free school meals together is a win-win for all.

Red Hook Conservancy
Vibrant Parks & Recreational Spaces

P.O. Box 310482
Brooklyn, NY 11231

Date: May 27, 2021

Dear Chairperson and Council Member of the Subcommittee on Capital Budget
**Re: Testimony for the NYC City Council Finance Committee Executive FY22 Budget Hearing**

During this early spring in Red Hook, Brooklyn, Red Hook Conservancy members and volunteers have been out in the Red Hook community caring for parks, playgrounds, and street trees. What we encounter in these spaces are large crowds, litter-strewn parks, and off-leash dogs beyond the allowed hours. We have observed that the maintenance and operations crew is overwhelmed because they're understaffed and so struggle to keep up with the litter and help to maintain order when public confrontations arise due to off-leash dog rules or other issues. For example, in Coffey Park in Red Hook there exists a large green space with seating, a children's playground, and a comfort station. Children in the play area and adults must navigate how they use the park because dogs are playing, running, or barking at each other while off-leash. Nothing prevents off leash dogs from snapping at passersby or getting into altercation with each other as their owners stand some distance away. Year in and year out this level of law breaking has increased with no end in sight. Police Enforcement Patrol officers (PEP) who would normally help to deter these actions are nowhere to be found. Because of the City's underinvestment in these officer positions, with approximately 300 PEP officers expected to patrol all of NYC's parks, and mainly waterfronts in the summer- local parks such as Coffey Park and other open spaces in the community suffer.

For too long the New York City Council, Mayor, other elected officials, and the public have operated under the premise that current funding for the New York City Parks Department is sufficient to cover the immediate needs. After all, it appeared that each year New York City parks were cleaned, painted, and planted by park staff. But that is a mirage. Volunteer organizations such as ours mobilize thousands of volunteers a year to take up the slack maintaining our parks. When volunteers contribute less labor, as we saw during the pandemic, and the litter piles up and little to no work gets done in the parks, the true nature of parks funding is there for all to see. It is time for the New York City to truly invest in our parks. Since the 1970s, park staff has been cut by almost 40% while our city's population has increased, and more parks are being built. Volunteers cannot be the backbone of the parks department and we at Red Hook Conservancy see a bad faith effort on the part of the City Council and the Mayor when they tout the importance of parks but underfund and underinvest in them. Coffey Park, Valentino Pier, and Bush Clinton Playground in Red Hook are just a few of the local spaces that suffer because of understaffing due to hiring freezes, lack of baseline funding for positions, and the cycle-to-cycle funding that characterize the City's commitment to parks. We expect that a commitment of 1% of the City's budget to the parks department would go a long way to providing better support and maintenance for our parks and open spaces including street tree maintenance.

Thank you for considering our testimony,

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Red Hook Conservancy
Vibrant Parks & Recreational Spaces

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# FRANCINE GARBER-COHEN'S TESTIMONY FOR MAY 25, 2021

Dear Council Members,

I am Fran Garber-Cohen, President of Regina Opera. For 51 years, Regina Opera has offered fully-staged operas with full orchestra and English supertitles, as well as many concerts. We provide affordable entertainment in accessible venues for audience members who may not otherwise attend live performances. The performances bring happiness and empathy to our audiences, and bring people together, especially Senior Citizens which make up about 65% of our audience.

We perform 3 full operas each season, each featuring 4 ticketed and one totally free performance, complete with supertitles, and many free concerts in parks, libraries, and festivals, and ticketed concerts in our theater in Sunset Park, an underserved and low income community. All bring foot traffic to local restaurants and shops, assisting them financially in this difficult time.

The need for this cultural enrichment is reflected in the fact that over 4000 people usually attend our performances each season.

Due to COVID-19 Regina Opera lost the ticket income and private sponsorships from 16 months of live productions, as we pivoted to posting

archived  operas and new recorded concerts on our YouTube page.  Regina Opera, as well as the huge number of arts and cultural organizations, have relied upon DCLA and City Council Members funding, such as that of Council Members Menchaca and Brannan to stay afloat – paying for rent, insurance, phone and phone answering services

We at Regina Opera make the following requests that will help insure that all arts and culture can re-open in the Fall:

* $30 million dollars be allocated to DCLA to go to arts groups of all sizes.

* funding for initiatives such as CASA and SU-CASA be restored;

* the baselining of funding for Coalitions of Theaters of Color;

* and the support for the full Cultural Recovery Plan which asks for 40 million dollars to support NYC Culture as we try to recover from this pandemic.

Thank You,



Fran Garber-Cohen

To Whom This May Concern,

My name is Rohan Bhargava and I am the Founder and Artistic Director of Rovaco Dance Company, based in New York City. I am of South Asian descent and my organization serves a majority of Asian identifying artists and audiences.

2021 is the first year that my company received NYC funding from Brooklyn Arts Council's Community Arts Grant Program. This kind of funding is very important for a small-scale dance organization like Rovaco, helping us create art and produce events that serve the local community.

Asian Americans are 15% of the NYC population, yet we do not receive even close to 15% of city funding. My testimony attests to the need and impact of government funding for small-scale arts organizations and sole proprietors who do not have a legal 501(c)(3) status. We need more opportunities and funding that covers a larger portion of the arts landscape and equitably distributes funds to AAPI artists in proportion to their population.

Sincerely,
Rohan Bhargava (he/him)
Artistic Director, Rovaco Dance




www.rovacodance.com



RSS RIVERDALE SENIOR SERVICES
2600 Netherland Avenue, Bronx, NY 10463
(718) 884-5900 | rssny.org

**RSS- Riverdale Senior Services**

RSS- Riverdale Senior Services has a 47- year history serving older adults and their families in the Northwest Bronx. RSS offers vital resources that support aging-in-place and is a long-standing provider in the NYC Aging network (DFTA). RSS programs include a Senior Center, the Adult Day Activities Program, Health Management Services, Transportation Services and Geriatric Mental Health Services. We serve 2000 clients annually and offer programs and activities designed to connect, empower, and engage older adults. RSS offers 50 monthly programs virtually including weekend and evening programming. Since the onset of the pandemic we have made over $16,000 wellness check-in calls. We recognize that in the future our center will offer services/programs on-site, off-site, and virtually.

As New York begins to emerge from a pandemic that took the lives of thousands of individuals, many of whom were older New Yorkers, and as this budget, built upon millions in new stimulus funds, will plant the seeds of recovery for our City at-large, the stakes have rarely been higher.

**With this in mind, RSS- Riverdale Senior Services is appreciative of the investments included in the Executive Budget to both better support older New Yorkers through programs such as Senior Centers, as well as, to support the human services sector at large.** We are deeply appreciative of the decision to fully restore funding for the Indirect Cost Rate initiative; implement the $10 million of outstanding model Senior Center budget funding promises; and include $39.4 million towards Senior Centers and NORCs. These investments are an important step towards bolstering a system that has been critical to supporting older New Yorkers through the historically difficult fight against COVID-19.

**However, given that the Department for the Aging (DFTA) budget remains at less than ½ of 1% of the City budget, despite older adults representing a rapidly increasing 20% of the population, the City must go farther in its Adopted Budget to truly set the trajectory for a recovery that leaves no New Yorker behind.**

Centered around the inequities made apparent during the pandemic, we propose three major investments to better address senior hunger, the digital divide, and wages for essential workers.

1. **$16.6 million for Home-delivered Meals.** Such funding would provide $13.6 million for weekday meals and $3 million for weekend and holiday meals, both to increase capacity to meet new demand and bring the per-meal rate to the national average. The home-delivered meals program, which is different from emergency food program, GetFood NYC, serves older New Yorkers who, due to chronic illness, mobility limitation, or disability, will remain homebound long after COVID-19 fully

subsides. For many meal recipients, this meal delivery represents not only a significant source of nutrients, but the only contact they will have with the outside world that day.

2. **$4.4 Million to address the digital divide.** $4.4 million of this funding would allow for improved technology and service access for older adults by investing in the technology infrastructure at Senior Centers, as well as directly supporting individual access to technology.
3. **$48 Million Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for essential human services workers.** Throughout COVID-19, human services workers across sectors have stepped up to provide critical services in new ways, including to keep New Yorkers older New Yorkers fed, assist older adults in receiving vaccinations, and combating the life-threatening effects of social isolation. Despite this, the wages of these workers, the majority of whom are women and Black and Brown individuals, are slated to remain stagnant. It is critical that the budget rectify this, allocating $48 million in funding to ensure all human services workers can receive a 3% COLA.
    a. $1.7 million is needed to ensure parity for NORC Directors to Senior Center staff.

Recognizing the significant role that City Council discretionary plays in meeting the hyper-local needs within districts, these funds must also be restored to FY20 levels and bolstered as appropriate, including by restoring $2,040,000 that was previously made available through the “Healthy Aging” initiative.

New York’s more than 1.8 million older adults are counting on these investments to demonstrate meaningful action for aging in response to COVID-19. Thank you for the opportunity to bring these issues to your attention

South Asian Council
For Social Services

New York City Council Committee on Health
Submitting Testimony on MCCAP

May 25, 2021

My name is Rehan Mehmood and I am the Director Health Services at South Asian For Council for Social Services (SACSS). Thank you for giving us this opportunity to submit this testimony. SACSS serves diverse immigrant communities across New York City. The communities we serve need continued support and interventions, especially in the areas of healthcare access. At SACSS we speak 18 different languages which includes 12 South Asian languages (Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi, Gujarati, Nepali, Tamil, Tibetan, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi), Cantonese, Mandarin, Malay, Creole and Spanish.

Over the past 21 years SACSS has assisted over 50,000 individuals and families in accessing healthcare. As a navigator for the New York State of Health and a Community Health advocate we know how important it is for vulnerable clients and families to have access to services which can help them navigate the complex healthcare system.

MCCAP has filled a major gap by providing New Yorkers direct access to service providers who have the expertise and cultural competence to assist them with their health insurance and related needs. During the current fiscal year SACSS has provided MCCAP services to 165 clients and has conducted 5 outreach events till date. During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic our advocates have continuously been assisting clients with COVID19 testing, scheduling vaccination appointments, connecting clients to doctors and pharmacies, assisting clients in getting post COVID-19 treatment, helping them understand and use telehealth services. Over the past few months, we had also seen an increase in number of clients who had unwillingly desired to end their health insurance just because of misinformation about Public Charge rule. Because of MCCAP our advocates were able to provide accurate information to clients and were successful in helping clients continue with their coverages.

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In these difficult times where our advocates are providing vital healthcare information to the clients, they are also being connected to other important resources and benefits like food pantry, SNAP, SCRIE, DRIE, rental assistance, cooked meals and mental health counselling.

Outreach activities have been carried out in different parts of Queens. SACSS partnered with on faith-based centers, libraries, community, and Senior centers to conduct outreach events.

We would like to request the honorable City Council to approve $750,000 for MCCAP which will allow us to continue and expand the program to other parts of New York City.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit our testimony.

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Testimony of Alexandra Rizio
Safe Passage Project
Committee on Finance
May 25, 2021

Thank you to the Finance Committee for inviting testimony. My name is Alexandra Rizio and I am a Managing Attorney at the Safe Passage Project, a non-profit legal services organization that provides free representation to immigrant children facing deportation. We serve children who live in the five boroughs of New York City and in the two counties of Long Island. The support of the City of New York has been instrumental in our work.

No immigrant, not even a child, is appointed a lawyer in immigration court. If a child cannot afford to hire a lawyer, they will be forced to defend themselves alone, against a trained government prosecutor and a judge, with deportation back to dangerous conditions as the likely outcome. Safe Passage Project helps correct this injustice by providing free attorneys to kids. Beyond legal services, our social work team addresses the broader needs of clients, such as school enrollment, homelessness, access to health care, psychological services, and public benefits.

The City Council has been a stalwart support that allows us to fight on behalf of young immigrants: you fund our work through the Unaccompanied Minors Initiative and the IOI grant stream. Without your unwavering support, which we've had since 2014, we would not be able to serve the over 1,200 clients that Safe Passage serves. In fact, the City Council's support for the ICARE collaborative is groundbreaking on a national level, and has shown that local initiatives that support universal representation for immigrants –essentially filling a gap where the federal government refuses to act – is not only possible, but successful. Thank you.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare and heightened many of the inequalities in our system. Undocumented immigrants may work in essential jobs, but most lack job security, are less likely to have health insurance, are can be hesitant to seek emergency medical treatment. To compound these problems, undocumented immigrants have been deliberately excluded from most economic recovery programs. At the same time, our immigration work didn't stop. Filings still had to be made on time. Kids were still being entered into removal proceedings and they needed lawyers.

The pandemic has proven that small organizations like Safe Passage and our partners are well-positioned to deliver aid the aid and resources that immigrant families need. Since the first cases of COVID-19 were reported in New York City, our social work team worked to connect young people with essential resources including food, housing, and medical help. In response to the urgent needs of our clients, Safe Passage Project launched an emergency response cash assistance program in April 2020. Over the course of 2020, we distributed $40,000 in assistance

to 130 households. Our social work team made more than 500 referrals to an array of resources, including connecting clients to mental health, medical health, health insurance, food assistance, and shelters. We are proud to have connected so many families with badly needed resources, but we know that many clients continue to struggle with food and housing insecurity. We likewise continued the struggle on the immigration front: we have conducted legal intake screenings for 285 clients since April 2020, and filed hundreds of applications and motions with immigration services and with various courts.

After more than a year of being shutdown, immigration court is slated to reopen in mid-July 2021. We do not expect a smooth transition: thousands of hearings were postponed due to the pandemic, and the court will no doubt rapidly schedule our clients for deportation hearings, employing unwieldy and inaccurate systems. We expect the court's previous inefficiencies to continue; hearing notices will be sent to the wrong address, clients won't receive notice of their hearings, and many will receive removal orders in their absence. Our staff and clients will commit many hours to correcting mistakes with potentially deadly consequences.

At the same time, the federal government is processing thousands of unaccompanied who have recently arrived at our borders. Some of these young people had been expelled from the border under the Trump administration due to specious "public health" rules and are only now being processed according to the law. Others have recently arrived. We expect several thousand young people to arrive in New York in the coming months, and all of them will need lawyers.

The stakes have never been higher, and our already hard-working staff will be pushed to do more. Funding for organizations like ours is never guaranteed. The ICARE Collaborative was very successful in ensuring that New York's child immigrants are represented in court, but the Robin Hood portion of the funding from this public-private partnership is coming to a close. We recognize that these are very uncertain times, particularly from a budgeting perspective, but I ask that the City Council continue to elevate the need for these services.

With the City Council's support, Safe Passage Project and our partners will hopefully help even more clients navigate the maze that is the immigration system, defend themselves against deportation, and access stability and essential services during this difficult period. Safe Passage Project offers our sincere thanks to the City Council for being a leader on the issues of legal representation in immigration court, especially for children, and for caring for all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status. Thank you.

sage | Advocacy & Services for LGBT Elders
We refuse to be invisible®

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**Testimony to the New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing**
**Delivered in person on May 25, 2021 by Melissa Sklarz, Senior Government Relations Strategist**

My name is Melissa Sklarz and I am the Senior Government Relations Strategist for SAGE. On behalf of SAGE and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) elders we serve, thank you for holding this hearing today on the FY22 Executive Budget and thank you to Speaker Johnson, Chair Dromm and the entire City Council for being a champion of LGBT elders and for its longtime commitment to SAGE. Thank you so much for your leadership throughout the last year. In particular, we appreciate your commitment to LGBT older New Yorkers, and your leadership in the Council on behalf of those communities.

Founded in 1978, SAGE is the country's first and largest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBT older people. Because of their thin support networks, LGBT older people need to rely more heavily on community service providers for care as they age. Yet, they're often distrustful of mainstream providers – and for good reason. LGBT older people are more likely to face discrimination around their sexual orientation and gender identity when accessing health care, social services or other programs. For so many LGBT elders, SAGE is their safety net.

We know how deeply our LGBT elders rely on SAGE for support, community and connection. SAGE is a cornerstone of New York's LGBT community, providing vital services to LGBT elders and older people living with HIV for 43 years.

Over this last 14 months, we have seen firsthand how the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically increased LGBT elders' needs for services and supports. This is not only because of their age, but also because of social isolation, high levels of underlying health conditions like HIV and diabetes, higher levels of poverty and food and housing insecurity, lower access to health care and supportive services, social isolation and thin support networks and mistrust of government and other institutions based on historical and current discrimination and mistreatment.

Throughout the pandemic, SAGE has shifted considerable capacity, energy and resources to adapt to our programs and services for virtual and telephonic delivery. SAGE exists to provide LGBT elders with comprehensive services through our SAGE Centers, care management, SAGEVets and related health, housing, and other services. SAGE's programs and services are specifically designed to meet the needs of LGBT older New Yorkers.

While we have not offered in person congregate programming at our SAGE Centers since the spring of 2020, we have reinvented and reimagined our programming to meet the demand among LGBT elders. In two days, we pivoted our programs and services to telephonic and virtual formats to ensure that the thousands of LGBT elders who rely on SAGE can continue to be engaged and stay connected. Each week,

SAGE is offering more than 110 virtual SAGE Center programs, attracting hundreds of LGBT elders and allies.

In addition to our SAGE Centers' virtual programming, SAGE is offering ongoing virtual and telephonic meetings, support groups, financial support services, and programs for our City's LGBT elders, including for older LGBT veterans through our SAGEVets program.

Older LGBT veterans, many of whom were already struggling with financial insecurity, food insecurity, acute social isolation, and exacerbating health disparities, are dealing with mounting challenges. Throughout the pandemic, SAGEVets has offered support, information, and referral to elder LGBT veterans; conducted wellness checks among participants; offered telephonic one-on-one and group support; and, launched virtual programming to continue to connect older LGBT veterans to the community.

SAGE also has launched several new initiatives to respond to the emerging and mounting needs of older LGBT New Yorkers. Financial insecurity among LGBT elders has been exacerbated by the economic devastation from COVID-19. That's why we launched SAGECents – our new online program developed to improve LGBT elders' financial stability. Further, within weeks of the initial shelter-in-place directive, SAGE launched SAGEConnect, a national program that matches volunteers with LGBT elders to combat social isolation.

LGBT older New Yorkers need and deserve affordable, welcoming housing. To address the housing insecurity among LGBT older New Yorkers, SAGE and our developer partners opened our city's first LGBT-welcoming affordable elder housing. With support from New York City and State, and with our developer partners, SAGE opened our state's first LGBT-welcoming affordable elder housing Stonewall House in Fort Greene, Brooklyn in 2020 and in January of this year, we opened Crotona Pride House in the East Tremont neighborhood in the Bronx. Both buildings offer 100% affordable apartments for low income elders with a portion of the units specifically set aside for chronically homeless elders.

Both Stonewall House and Crotona Pride House feature ground-floor state-of-the-art SAGE Centers, open to residents and members of the surrounding community. Through the SAGE Centers, SAGE will offer care management and support services. The SAGE Centers will follow SAGE's highly successful model, offering residents and local community members daily congregate meals, social services, educational workshops, counseling, health, wellness and nutrition classes, and peer support – complimented by on-site care management. These SAGE Centers will also bring much needed services to neighborhoods lacking in LGBT supports – in both communities, there is an overall dearth of resources for older people, especially LGBT older people. As such, SAGE expects serving an influx of elders from the surrounding communities.

This housing, programs and services have been and continue to be crucial for our city's LGBT elders. New York's LGBT elders rely on SAGE for support, community and connection.
Despite the challenges of the pandemic and its devastating impact on older people, SAGE has continued to forge ahead. Our commitment to supporting, caring for and engaging our LGBT elders has never wavered. And, we respectfully request the continued commitment of the New York City Council.

SAGE requests a restoration of our New York City Council funding, commensurate with City FY20 levels. Support from the City Council fuels our supports for the residents in Stonewall House and Crotona Pride House, sustains our citywide network of SAGE Centers and its robust virtual programing and complimentary case management, and supports our geriatric mental health initiative.

Specifically, SAGE requests:

- Restoration of $1,200,000 in Council Initiative LGBT Senior Services in Every Borough funding to support our expanded network of LGBT Centers in the Bronx, Harlem, Brooklyn, and Staten Island, where LGBT elders can receive the full array of services as mentioned.
- Restoration of $150,000 through the Senior Centers, Program and Enhancement Initiative to support care management and social services for vulnerable LGBT elders at our flagship Edie Windsor SAGE Center in Midtown Manhattan.
- Restoration of $100,000 from the Council's LGBT Caucus will allow SAGE to provide culturally and linguistically-competent experienced Care Management at our expanded SAGE sites, in Harlem, Brooklyn, the Bronx and Staten Island allowing diverse elders to receive supports in their own community.
- Restoration of $100,00 from the Citywide Initiative of Veterans Community Development to fund SAGEVets programming, outreach and support among our City's older LGBT veterans.
- Restoration of $86,000 will allow SAGE to continue to provide crucial mental health services to LGBT older people most at risk, those who are frail and homebound, through comprehensive screening for mental health and substance abuse issues, home visits and support groups, and referral to partner health care and substance abuse programs.
- Restoration of $57,000 from the Council's NORC Initiative to support the community and supports offered at SAGE Center Harlem.
- $150,000 in additional support to bridge the gap between SAGE's current discretionary funding from the New York City Council and the anticipated need for older adult center services and programs among building residents and community members through the SAGE Center Bronx at Crotona Pride House.

SAGE deeply values our partnership with the Council. Thank you for your consideration of SAGE's funding request. We deeply value our partnership with you and look forward to working closely with you in the future. Thank you for your continued partnership and for your leadership of our great City.

Thank you for accepting this testimony for the Committee on Finance.

As spelled-out in the attached white paper, we need your help to close the STEAM equity divide.

The events of the last few years have highlighted the enormous barriers to true equity and inclusion in the fundamental pathways to success. Affordable access to broadband connections and devices remain significant obstacles to full and equitable inclusion. In addition, we've heard industry leaders from the fields of science, technology, engineering, arts/architecture, and math (STEAM) call for greater diversity within their professions and a greater pool of qualified candidates from local communities.

For far too many of our City's students, obstacles to success are great.

Without diminishing the importance of overcoming systemic shortfalls in fair and safe housing, nutritious food supply, and affordable healthcare, this paper will focus on the strategies and resources needed to build a strong foundation for students' success in STEAM careers.

This can be accomplished if we work together to:

- Build on the strengths of the City's in-school and after-school programs
- Provide access to affordable, accessible, and impactful STEAM education
- Leverage the resources of the private, non-profit, and public sectors

However, we need to start where resources are needed most:

- Economically disadvantaged communities
- Under-resourced after-school programs
- And wherever students struggle to see themselves as successful

Funding the Salvadori Center's requests for City-wide initiatives is an important first step ~ requests include:

- $100,000 – After-School Enrichment
- $150,000 – Speaker Initiative

Both these initiatives will provide academically rigorous, yet fun, collaborative, project-based, STEAM curriculum throughout the five Boroughs. Students will not only learn core grade-specific STEAM concepts, independent studies show that Salvadori programs consistently build students' confidence in their ability to succeed in math and science and change their view of school ~ seeing the value and relevance to their lives.

Similarly, providing funding for Council Member allocations will empower local decision making and heighten the City's ability to get funds to where the resources are needed most. Salvadori has the following request to each Council Member:

- $10,000 – Discretionary funding

- $20,000 – CASA (for after-school)
- $15,000 – Digital Inclusion & Literacy Initiative (for in-school)

The attached white paper proposes a three-part solution to serve after-school centers in under-resourced communities. Robust underwriting through a public, private, and non-profit partnership can provide:

- Push-in programs provided by qualified STEAM non-profits for elementary students
- Stand-alone curricula that can be successfully implemented by an adult who is not a STEAM subject-matter expert for middle and high school students
- Mid-career STEAM industry mentors to nurture, encourage, and introduce students to college and career pathways in STEAM

Thank you for your time and hard work to make New York City a place where everyone can thrive!

Best wishes and stay well!

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**About the Salvadori Center**

As you may know, Salvadori's in-school, after-school, and summer multi-day programs celebrate a collaborative, hands-on, project-based approach to learning through the built environment ~ buildings, bridges, parks, and communities.

Students learn new things about the city they live in. They see the math and science in the buildings they enter, the bridges they cross, and the parks they play in. They quickly understand why math and science are relevant to their lives. The teachers we coach become our strongest advocates and schools return to work with us year after year. In fact, over 75% of schools returned each year.

Salvadori Educators work with schools to build **durable skills**, **engage all students**, **provide results** that reflect **high levels of ownership**, and directly **support educational standards** through the **(4) C's**:

- **Collaboration ~** working together to hypothesize, build, test, and solve problems
- **Critical thinking ~** analyzing how and why things work
- **Creativity ~** posing creative solutions to real-world challenges
- **Communication ~** listening, learning, and articulating complex ideas and concepts

**Our programs help schools:**

- Make math, science, and the arts **intellectually accessible for all learners**
- Increase student **comprehension and success at grade-level math and science**
- Lay the foundation for **future STEAM degrees and/or careers**
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**What schools need to do:**

- Select an in-school residency or after-school program (see attached Program Flyer)

**Our prices have not changed since 2013!**

Despite the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic we provided programs to more than **7,100 students** in **268 classroom** through **81,300 student impact hours**. While that is only **84%** of our pre-COVID impact, it is impressive in light of schools opening late, closing, re-opening, shifting to all remote learning to blended, and now in-person.

And these numbers do not include the roughly **75,000 students** that watch our programs on the **DOE's *Lets Learn NYC!*** on **WNET THIRTEEN** or the tens of thousands of students and new "at-home educators" who received Salvadori's weekly FREE STEAM Lessons during the height of the pandemic.

We are very proud to have a culture of service and to be able to respond and help students in need!

**Assessing what we value…**

For eight years our independent assessments show Salvadori programs yield **statistically significant** positive change in student comprehension around grade-specific math and science concepts. And in 2019/2020, a new assessment showed that **Salvadori students performed significantly better** on standardized tests**!**

Perhaps even more impressive, a New York University study compared Salvadori students with non-Salvadori students and found that students who didn't receive Salvadori programs showed a steady decrease in their perception that math and science are relevant. **Students who received Salvadori increased their perception that math and science are relevant and maintained a sense that math and science are relevant even months after the program ended.**

Qualitative and anecdotal data collected from classroom teachers, Salvadori Educators, and students complement and reinforce independent assessment findings are available on our website).

In summary, Salvadori programs:

- promote **college and career readiness**
- engage students through **project-based exercises**
- use the **built environment** as a vehicle for learning
- employ **collaborative problem solving** that involves all participants
- produce results that reflect high levels of **creativity** and **ownership**

I've attached our **2020-2021 Program Flyer**, which outlines all of our programs and services as well as a list of funders who make grants to teachers or schools. **Our prices haven't change since 2013** and **will remain the same for the 2020/2021 academic year**.

See what is new at Salvadori by visiting our web site and following us on social media:

- Salvadori Web Site ~ assessment reports, resources for teachers, etc.
- YouTube ~ short videos of classroom projects
- Facebook ~ news and images of student experiences
- LinkedIn ~ professional relationships and networking











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See it. Build it. Know it.



# Closing the STEAM Equity Divide

## Closing the STEAM Equity Divide

Success should not be determined by the color of someone's skin, their zip code, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, or their family's wealth.

Success should be determined by equal access to well-rounded education, instruction that supports all learners, fair access to resources, and equal opportunities that enable each student to realize their full potential.

The events of the last few years have highlighted the enormous barriers to true equity and inclusion in the fundamental pathways to success. For decades, we've heard industry leaders from the fields of science, technology, engineering, arts/architecture, and math (STEAM) call for greater diversity within their professions and a greater pool of qualified candidates from local communities.

Yet, for far too many of our City's students, the obstacles to success are great.

Without diminishing the importance of overcoming systemic shortfalls in fair and safe housing, nutritious food supply, and affordable healthcare, this paper will focus on the strategies and resources needed to build a strong foundation for students' success in STEAM careers.

This can be accomplished if we work together to:

- Build on the strengths of the City's in-school and after-school programs
- Provide access to affordable, accessible, and impactful STEAM education
- Leverage the resources of the private, non-profit, and public sectors

However, we need to start where resources are needed most:

- Economically disadvantaged communities
- Under-resourced after-school programs
- And wherever students struggle to see themselves as successful



***"Success should not be determined by the color of someone's skin, their zip code, gender, sexual orientation, or their family's wealth."***

Unfortunately, there are not enough STEAM experts to go around; students need:

- Access to curricula and instruction that are easy to understand and follow
- Engaging lessons that are designed for all learning styles
- Opportunities to debate, discuss, and design solutions to real world challenges

And for far too long, after-school programs that serve our city's under-resourced communities, have lacked high quality, low cost resources. After-school providers that serve our city's students in these communities are desperate for access to reliable, consistent, and proven experts in STEAM education.

To make matters worse, the negative financial impact of the COVID pandemic hit the DOE's budget hard for both the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 academic years.[1] And we don't yet know the longer-term impact on student learning. While all schools suffered, those without access to supplemental resources, or the volunteers to secure those resources, will be hit exponentially harder. Similarly, NYCHA and many City-sponsored after-school programs within its Community Centers, already strapped for cash, scramble to survive through the pandemic.[2]

Solving these challenges may seem insurmountable, but together we ***can*** solve them.

This white paper proposes a three-part solution to serve after-school centers in under-resourced communities. Robust underwriting through a public, private, and non-profit partnership could support:

- Push-in programs provided by qualified STEAM non-profits for elementary students
- Stand-alone curricula that can be successfully implemented by an adult who is not a STEAM subject-matter expert for middle and high school students
- Mid-career STEAM industry mentors to nurture, encourage, and introduce students to college and career pathways in STEAM

[1] https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/7/22/21334981/education-budget-cuts-hiring-freeze

[2] https://cbcny.org/research/nychas-operating-outlook







## New York City has what it takes...



There is no better place than New York City to build the next generation of engineers, architects, designers, and other building industry professionals. The city is rich in resources, experiences, and opportunities. Our nation's financial capital, a world-renowned cultural hub, and a center for innovative technology, construction, engineering, design, and architecture, is a 21st century STEAM city.

So, it is no surprise that New York City continues to be a magnet that draws young, creative talent from all over the world. People come to New York to realize their potential, forge their futures, make their fortunes, and realize their ambitions.

But what about our children?

New York City students have just as much potential to succeed in STEAM fields as anyone else. In fact, with all New York City's resources ~ private, public, and non-profit ~ our students should have pathways to success that others can only dream of.

Our schools are filled with hardworking and dedicated teachers and administrators. Our Department of Education (DOE) produced the STEM Framework, an excellent guide to impactful STEM instruction.[3] And our city has the Comprehensive Afterschool System (COMPASS)[4] and Schools Out New York City (SONYC)[5] programs that supplement in-school learning.

But despite our hardworking educators and the city's existing resources, too many students are missing out.

For example, because there isn't a teacher certification in STEAM, teachers must independently research and develop ways to integrate STEAM into their classrooms. More often than not, they must do this in their own time. Teachers with more free time and/or resources can create these additional enrichment lessons for students (we call them additional, but really, they are essential). Students whose teachers have less free time and resources lose out.

[3] https://www.weteachnyc.org/resources/resource/stem-framework/
[4] https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dycd/services/after-school/comprehensive-after-school-system-of-new-york-city-compass.page
[5] https://growingupnyc.cityofnewyork.us/programs/sonyc/

This disparity in access to quality STEAM education prevents a strong continuum of learning for all.



## Tapping available resources to build success…

Positive systemic change requires a team of experts working together towards a common goal.

New educational initiatives must address grade-specific learning, deliver age-appropriate instruction, and create new approaches to engaging students. They must engage subject matter experts in STEAM education to provide push-in programs for younger elementary students who need a STEAM educator to guide their learning. They must provide intuitive and easy to follow independent learning opportunities for older middle and high school students. And they should partner with STEAM industry mentors to nurture, encourage, and introduce students to college and career pathways in STEAM.

> ***"Positive systemic change requires a team of experts working together towards a common goal."***

Vital to any successful STEAM program is a deep understanding of the NYC DOE's STEM Framework and clear alignment with educational standards such as the Common Core math standards, Next Generation science standards, and the Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Visual Arts. Programs should build STEAM literacy, place theoretical concepts in familiar contexts, and give students the opportunity to practice new skills and apply new knowledge to real-world challenges.

STEAM programs are in high demand in any after-school environment.

But many City-run after-school programs struggle to retain qualified program staff, especially at entry level. Newly trained employees often move swiftly to higher paying jobs with new employers. While this is great for employees' individual growth, after-school programs are left with inexperienced program staff and an expensive, ongoing training cycle, while students continue to suffer.

By contracting with qualified nonprofit STEAM organizations, City-sponsored after-school

programs have regular access to highly trained educators and state of the art curricula that reinforce in-school learning through fun, engaging activities. Effective STEAM educational non-profits constantly refine and update curricula. Their educators engage in year-round professional development on best practices, classroom management, and how to communicate STEAM concepts at various grades ~ they are subject matter experts in STEAM.

While issues of access and quality can cross socio-economic boundaries, under-resourced communities always experience the greatest disadvantage.

Families in wealthier neighborhoods may have access to private and corporate support. Parents might only work one job or have a partner who doesn't have to work at all. They can afford to contribute more to their student's school, the PTA, or help obtain coveted grants to fund programs that are beyond the school budget.

But why reinvent the wheel? New York City is rich with STEAM educational organizations dedicated to developing and delivering rigorous STEAM instruction.

There are many organizations like the Salvadori Center that provide rigorous grade-specific K-12 programs to support and supplement in-school education through engaging, rigorous, and impactful age-appropriate after-school programs. Programs that help reduce the STEAM gap for students who lack access to quality STEAM education.

New York City has great after-school centers filled with students eager to learn. And our STEAM industries have young professionals burning to make a difference and open the world of STEAM to the next generation.

Together, through a true public/private partnership, we can help our most vulnerable communities overcome these disparities.  We owe it to our children, and to the future of New York City's STEAM industries, to provide opportunities and programs that help local students see and believe that they too can excel in science, technology, engineering, arts/architecture, and math.

We have the experts, the talent, and the desire to help all our city's students succeed.



***"We have the experts, the talent, and the desire to help all our city's students succeed."***





*"Young children are quite capable of doing, at a developmentally informed level, all of the scientific practices that high schoolers can do: they can make observations and predictions, carry out simple experiments and investigations, collect data, and begin to make sense of what they found. Having a set of practices like these that become routinized and internalized is going to really help them learn about their world."*

*"Research also shows that STEM support should start early: children in disadvantaged circumstances, especially, start school lacking the foundation for that success."*

## The Core Principals of Success

We all know teaching STEAM ~ science, technology, engineering, arts/architecture, and math ~ at an early age is important. It captures students' interest at an early age, builds confidence, and the self-perception that they can succeed.[6] A 2016 study, for example, examined learning experiences in more than 7,750 children from kindergarten entry to the end of eighth grade, and found that early acquisition of knowledge about the world was correlated with later science success:

> Children's early knowledge about the natural and social sciences, self-regulatory behaviors, and reading and mathematics achievement may constitute modifiable factors that, if increased through school-based interventions, may help prevent or reduce the early onset of science achievement gaps.[7]

Salvadori believes teaching STEAM also builds the 21st Century skills that all employers seek:

- **Creativity**
- **Critical Thinking**
- **Collaboration**
- **Communication**

Education professionals recognize the importance of building students' self-confidence and self-perception that they can succeed in school ~ valuable insights and integral to any STEAM education.



[6] https://joanganzcooneycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/jgcc_stemstartsearly_final.pdf

[7] Morgan, P. L., Farkas, G., Hillemeier, M. M., & Maczuga, S. (2016). Science achievement gaps begin very early, persist, and are largely explained by modifiable factors. Educational Researcher, 45(1), 18–35. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0013189X16633182





**Impact In Action**
On a recent STEM program classroom visit, a parent described how his daughter's behavior changed during a recent family trip out of the city. Usually she sat in the back seat, eyes glued to her iPad. But this time, she was absorbed by what they drove past and wouldn't stop talking about what she saw. She pointed out the trusses on bridges, different types of beams on buildings under construction, and even described how one stone arch reminded her of Roman arches.

We can build these strengths for all students by making learning truly accessible. Yes, that means providing lessons that are fun, engaging, and tied to students' cultural traditions, daily experiences, their neighborhoods, and the city they live in. We need to link rigorous grade-specific learning to students' lives and to the world in which they live so they value the relevance of what they learn.

**We need to make the theoretical concrete.**

For example, Salvadori ties grade-specific STEAM concepts to the built environment ~ structures built by humans. Students see math in the buildings they enter, science in the bridges surrounding the city, technology in the simple machines in their playgrounds, engineering in the structures that break the skyline, and arts/architecture in the City's landmarks, monuments, and memorials. Other organizations use our waterways, the ecosystem, or outer space.

> ***"We need to link rigorous grade-specific learning to students' lives and to the world in which they live so they value the relevance of what they learn."***

When programs tie new concepts to what the students experience every day, where they live, their cultures, traditions, and the world around them, students see how learning is relevant.



## Creativity



Creatvity is fostered by self-expression and the ability to give voice to ideas, concepts, and thoughts. This requires courage. Courage to be vulnerable. Courage to express ourselves, to take risks, and yes, the courage to fail.

However, it can be harder for students to express thoughts if they don't see themselves in what they are learning. When learning is student centered, when they see themselves and their culture contextualized in educational settings, they make connections faster. They feel part of the system and abstract concepts become concrete.

Familiar contexts can encourage students to express themselves, explore new concepts, and share ideas. As students feel safe and understood, they gain confidence to succeed, despite the obstacles that may lie ahead.

The last year has reminded us of the importance of inclusion for all students.

Responsive STEAM curricula incorporate underrepresented STEAM leaders ~ architects, engineers, builders, etc. ~ and their work. We must help students, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion, to see themselves reflected in the "STEAM heroes" they study so that they can see themselves in STEAM careers.



Inclusion provides a safe environment that opens the door to risk-taking, which fosters creativity.

> ***"We must help students, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion, to see themselves reflected in the "STEAM heroes" they study so that they can see themselves in STEAM careers."***

## Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a vital component of any STEAM program. It is integral to problem-solving and to the creative process.

The engineering, design, and scientific methods are similar. Each identifies a problem or challenge, analyzes a situation (posing questions as part of inquiry-based learning), proposes solutions, solicits feedback, develops/refines ideas, and improves the solution. All build on new knowledge gained through experimentation, trial and error, observation, and/or data. Each repeats the process until the desired effect is achieved.

Teaching STEAM effectively incorporates one or all three methods.

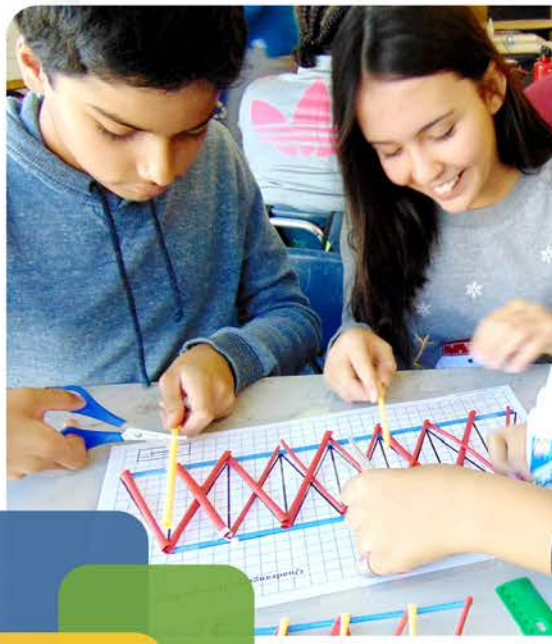
As students solve real-world challenges, they critically analyze a situation or problem. They form hypotheses and build experiments with their hands (project-based learning). And through trial and error they test and refine their hypotheses.

As you know, a hypothesis is merely an educated guess. As our knowledge grows our hypotheses become more accurate. Through trial and error ~ trying, failing, observing, analyzing, modifying the approach, and repeating until the desired result is achieved ~ students see the impact of critical thinking and learn the value of persistence and resiliency.

For many students, understanding "why they need to know this" increases engagement and improves knowledge retention.

For example, when a student is asked to form a hypothesis on which geometric shape will produce the strongest column in a building, they may wonder why it matters.

By learning that the shape of a column is based not only on its load bearing capacity (strength) but also on the amount of material used, which impacts cost and open space,



***Our Impact in Action:***

On a snowy icy day, I was entering a NYCHA Community Center to check-in on one of our programs. A maintenance worker asked, "What are you teaching these kids?" With some trepidation, I asked, "Why?" The maintenance worker replied in an annoyed tone, "A kid just told me to put rock slat on the handicapped ramp to increase the friction." I couldn't have been more proud. This is exactly what we want ~ students applying what they are learning in school to real world problems.

students ‘get it.’ Connecting school learning to the real world ~ such as columns in new construction around the city and in their schools ~ drives the concept home.

When concepts are made familiar, accessible, and relevant, students feel encouraged to ask questions and explore new concepts. Understanding why, and making connections to students’ lives, makes the theoretical concrete. They understand why analysis and critical thinking are important and can begin to apply this to other areas of their life.

***“making connections to students’ lives, makes the theoretical concrete.”***



## Collaboration

Collaboration fosters creativity through new ideas, perspectives, and points of view. And it is vital to any problem-solving process.

STEAM professionals must seek feedback and input from others. They gain perspectives beyond their personal world view. And they learn to work with and value the contributions of others ~ even people they may not know or like.

A collaborative approach to learning provides an environment where an individual student doesn’t have to have all the right answers. They can share ideas, build on each other’s insights, and work together to find the best solution. They can “think outside the box” more freely as they explore new ideas. As students are given opportunities to practice collaborating ~ valuing the insight and contribution of others ~ they quickly see how together we are stronger and better.

***“As students are given opportunities to practice collaborating ~ valuing the insight and contribution of others ~ they quickly see how together we are stronger and better.”***



More importantly, they are learning an essential skill needed to succeed in any career, and for every relationship.



## Communication

Communication is key. It isn't enough to have good ideas or to understand a problem. Students need to learn how to communicate effectively.

We need our students to develop STEAM literacy.

The confidence to express themselves, the patience to hear others, the strength to question their position, and the courage to re-formulate their ideas. They need to learn how to seek the opinion of an opposing side, to embrace contrasting points of view, and to gain the insight to improve their solutions and projects.

Talking is the smallest part of learning how to communicate.

When students work in small groups of 3 to 4 students, they can more freely express themselves. They can critically analyze problems collaboratively as they talk it through. And they can use new vocabulary as they share creative approaches and debate ideas and concepts. They are freed from the pressure of presenting to a large group, the entire class, or failing to impress their teacher. As discussions pulse between small group interactions to whole class conversations, students are given opportunities to practice communicating effectively as they learn how to express new ideas, pose thoughtful challenges, and hone new vocabulary.



Students develop STEAM literacy, become effective communicators, and acquire the ability to remold and build on each other's ideas.

STEAM learning that uses the engineering and design processes don't typically culminate in traditional "show and tell" presentations. Students articulate how knowledge gained throughout the semester informed the solution to their real-world final project. They now understand how to apply knowledge to solve new challenges.





I had the chance to see students who have difficulty in regular academic courses excel through this hands-on, interactive experience.
***-MS 72 (Bridges)***

The hands on nature of the projects excites all learners and gives them a chance to problem solve unlike any other class projects.
***- Salvadori Starter Teacher, PS 132 (My Community)***

As I have consistently stated, one of the greatest benefits of the Salvadori program is the emphasis on "hands on" activities. During my observations I was able to notice students taking on different roles during the actual "construction" process and witnessed students successfully taking on some leadership roles.
***- Salvadori Starter Principal, Northeast Intermediate (Bridges)***

These skills are key elements of success!

Not just in STEAM, but in life. Every employer wants people who can work with others to critically analyze a situation, pose creative solutions, and communicate effectively.

## Low Tech, High Impact

Tools that cost money ~ computers, internet access, equipment ~ can empower but they can also divide. We've learned the hard way that the technology gap unfairly favors students whose families can afford these tools as well as access to the internet, and who have an adult with time to help their child navigate new technology. Similarly, many cash strapped schools and after-school centers struggle to keep up with the latest technology.

A fair and equitable solution may take time to achieve, time we do not have.

Low tech project-based learning can quickly reduce this divide. Research shows that project-based learning can have a positive impact on learning outcomes for all students, irrespective of their background or socio-economic status:

> Students in project-based classrooms passed their AP (Advanced Placement) tests, outperforming students in traditional classrooms by 8 percentage points. Students from low-income households saw similar gains compared to their wealthier peers, making a strong case that well-structured PBL can be a more equitable approach than teacher-centered ones. Importantly, the improvements in teaching efficacy were both significant and durable: When teachers in the study taught the same curriculum for a second year, PBL students outperformed students in traditional classrooms by 10 percentage points.[8]

Project-based learning is accessible, intellectually safe, and effective. Materials are often affordable or even free. More importantly, students learn by doing. They don't just listen to lectures or read texts. They experience all modes of learning ~ seeing, reading, hearing, and doing. Adding a collaborative approach to project-based learning engages classmates in discussion and discovery.

[8] https://cesr.usc.edu/sites/default/files/Knowledge%20in%20Action%20Efficacy%20Study_18feb2021_final.pdf





***Successful programs:***

Design curricula so each lesson builds on content from the previous session, and engages students in activities that help them learn STEAM concepts by addressing real-world problems
Support increased student achievement by providing a coherent, in-depth learning experience that explores STEAM principles relevant to a particular theme.

Engage students as they build foundational knowledge, conduct controlled experiments, and complete projects that integrate engineering vocabulary, math skills, and design processes around a single topic, such as bridges or green design

***"Project-based learning is accessible, intellectually safe, and effective."***

Through collaboration, students learn that they don't have to have all the right answers. Each contributes to success by seeing, thinking, and sharing ideas that the others might not have noticed. Through a collaborative process, students build communication skills as they discuss and debate ideas, explore results, and share observations on the process.

By working together, the group is more effective than the sum of its parts.

A project-based approach to experimentation, especially one with a variety of instructional methods (seeing, hearing, reading, and discussing), supports all learners. Before beginning, it is important to work with other educators to gather relevant information on individual student learning styles in order to heighten understanding, improve access to new knowledge, and form teams that naturally build on each other's strengths.

Those who absorb information by hearing, gain through discussions and spoken instruction. Visual learners watch experiments unfold and appreciate image-based instructions. Those who learn by doing experience new knowledge through hands-on activities. And students who understand concepts through repetition gain while sharing ideas and presenting their projects.

Schools and after-school programs need hands-on, collaborative, project-based STEAM lessons more than ever, whether in-person, fully remote, or through blended learning. And while remote learning enables organizations to serve students in new ways, we must maintain a commitment to inclusion, accessibility, and providing a rigorous, transformative experience for all students, including those with special needs, such as English Language Learners, students living in transitional housing facilities (shelters), and students in hospital schools

A collaborative, project-based approach can embrace learners of all abilities.

## Call to action ~ Public Private Partnership



Laying the foundation for the next generation of STEAM professionals may seem like a herculean task but it is achievable. We can do it through a partnership between STEAM companies (architects, engineers, contractors, developers, etc.), STEAM educational organizations, and City government.

STEAM companies (engineering and architectural firms, contractors, developers, etc.) can support schools and under resourced communities by underwriting programs. They can open their doors and their project sites to the community ~ introducing students to the vast range of jobs needed to build our future. Companies' young STEAM professionals can serve as mentors, helping students see themselves in STEAM careers.

Educational non-profit organizations working in STEAM education, can work together to strengthen the pipeline of STEAM education. Starting with pre-school or Kindergarten and building a continuum of STEAM learning and success through college and beyond. STEAM educators can enhance school-based curricula, providing enriching after-school programs.

City government can provide financial, logistical, and physical support. City-operated spaces can house programs offered in collaboration with STEAM organizations. Agencies that serve our young people (NYC DOE, DYCD, DCLA, etc.) can provide access to students and teachers as well as partnership opportunities.

Independent programs, like those delivered by Salvadori and other industry non-profit organizations, are extremely valuable. But, despite quadrupling in size in ten years, Salvadori teaches only 8,500 of the NYC's 1.1 million students. Like so many organizations, we can do so much more but we need help, access, and partnerships.

A broader public/private partnership, supported by the City, corporations, and non-profits like Salvadori, can have a significant impact.

We support a public/private partnership to fund intensive after-school programs in select New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Community Centers across all five boroughs of New York City.  Each NYCHA Community Center would receive:

- Push-in programs provided by qualified STEAM non-profit organizations for elementary school aged students ~ a reasonable start would be 100 after-school programs
- Standalone curricula that can be successfully implemented by an adult who is not a STEAM subject-matter expert for middle school students ~ starting with 1,000 classes
- Connections to young STEAM industry mentors to nurture, encourage, and introduce high school students to college and career pathways in STEAM

***"A broad public/private partnership, supported by the City, corporations, and non-profits like Salvadori, can have a significant impact."***

Salvadori has a proven track record working with NYCHA on expansive programs serving students from all five boroughs.

Salvadori provided 50 STEAM programs across 25 sites (5 per borough) that reached thousands of students in public housing. Sites were selected based on need and in partnership with NYCHA leadership. To ensure a successful program, site staff were required to attend a full-day training program to establish buy-in and to develop an understanding of Salvadori's approach, instructional merit, and partner responsibilities.

The program was a success. The funder noted the high intellectual merit and broad impact, and described the program as a "successful", "interesting", "unique" program that "invests in training the instructors to provide good quality delivery". Unfortunately, sustaining long-term funding for broad City-wide initiatives is challenging for most funders even when successful.

Although the need was great and the program was effective, agencies serving students in our under-resourced communities can't afford to self-fund the program.

But together we can improve students' futures, and build a pathway for success!







**Contributors to this white paper include:**



## Kenneth Jones, M.Arch. Executive Director

Executive Director

Kenn Jones started his career as a licensed architect working in New Jersey and New York City. His career as an educator paralleled his career in architecture where he taught undergraduate courses in studio art, design, and the history of art and design, as well as graduate courses in non-profit management. Kenn has substantial experience developing project-based curricula, interdisciplinary programs, and adult education/professional development. He has served as a U.S. Diplomat in the Middle East and as the Executive Director of Peters Valley Craft Education Center and the New York Foundation for Architecture; before joining Salvadori he was the Curator of Education for the New Jersey State Museum. Kenn holds a M.Arch. degree from the University of Maryland and post-graduate studies in historic preservation and design as a Rotary Foundation Fellow at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. Using strategic planning and creative problem solving to achieve organizational goals and objectives, Kenn ties together his experiences in education, executive management, and philanthropy ~ an approach he brings to the Salvadori Center.

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## David McGillan

Deputy Director

David joined the Salvadori Center as Operations Manager in 2010 and changed roles in 2012 to become Development Director. A British native, David settled in New York City and managed four senior centers from 2005 to 2010, after several years working for local government in England and a year spent traveling the world. David graduated with a Master's in Public Administration, in 2011, from Baruch College, where the United Way of New York City honored him with a Senior Fellowship. In 1997 David received a BA with honors in Creative Writing from the University of Derby in the United Kingdom. David is an active volunteer with Street Soccer USA – helping the homeless develop life skills through soccer.

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## Malika Khalsa

Education Director

Malika is a Virginia native who moved to New York to attend St. Johns University where she received a degree in Childhood Education. After teaching for a year, Malika became a Child Protective Specialist, investigating allegations of abuse and neglect and ensuring safety for children. Later, Malika went on to work with City Year New York as a Program Manager, Program Director and Senior Program Director, managing different levels of staff whose goal was to provide academic tutoring and mentorship to students in under-resourced schools. Malika leads Salvadori's team of seven Educators in New York City region and Northeaster Pennsylvania to develop curricula and deliver programs to students through in-person, fully remote, and blended learning.

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## Emiliano Maghallighen

Senior Educator

Emiliano Maghallighen was born and raised in Mexico City and moved to New York to study at City College. He received a BS in Architecture in 2004 and joined Gensler as a job captain where he helped design retail stores including Apple, Victoria's Secret and Gap. While teaching at the Guggenheim museum and interning at the Museum of Modern Art, Emiliano became interested in education and the arts. In 2009 he joined Organizacion Tepeyac, a non-profit organization that provides after school programs, adult education, and immigrant advocacy to Mexicans in New York.

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## Roxanne Meija

Senior Educator

Roxanne was born in New York City and grew up in Queens, NY. As a child, she always had an interest in art and design. In 2006, she received her BFA in Architecture from Parsons The New School for Design, moving on to work in the design and construction industries. In July of 2010 she joined the Salvadori Center full-time to manage an after-school program in New York City Housing Authority community centers across the 5 boroughs. Currently, Roxanne serves as a Senior Educator and helps develop new curricula for Salvadori.

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## Juliana Wong

Senior Educator

Juliana grew up in London, UK where she received her BA Honors in Interior Design at Kingston University. She moved to Hong Kong and designed for Ronald Lu & Partners on a wide range of commercial and residential projects before joining Goudie Associates as Senior Designer on the expansion offices for Credit Suisse. Settling in New York City, she worked for Lowery Design and then as an Educator for the Brooklyn Center of Urban Environment. Juliana concurrently trained with the DOE as a parent advocate for the School Base Support Team, and furthered her interest in how children learn through project-based learning whilst being an active parent volunteer at NEST+M, one of the first K-12 grade seamless public schools in NYC. She holds a Certificate in TEFL, Diplome de Langue Francais and in Danielson's Competencies. Juliana joined the Salvadori Center staff in 2009 where she has been writing and developing curricula, leading professional development, mentoring and teaching in Salvadori programs across all five boroughs as a Senior Educator.

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Additional contributions from Richa Sadana and Jessica Guice.

salvadori CENTER

See it. Build it. Know it.




# About the Salvadori Center





"Lessons and achievements were scaffolded to build understanding of architecture and design, even at a kindergarten level: impressive! The educator infused our themes of character and building in her lessons, giving students a feeling of belonging, evident by the personal influence/experiences seen in final product."
***- My Community, Flatlands***

"The Salvadori experience allowed my students to gain 21st century skills through collaborative and innovation. The hands-on activities kept them engaged and most importantly, the gained an understanding of how to be responsible, future citizens of the world."
***- Building Green, Belmont Preparatory High School***

## About the Salvadori Center

Salvadori's in-school, after-school, and summer multi-day programs celebrate a collaborative, hands-on, project-based approach to learning through the built environment ~ buildings, bridges, parks, and communities.

Students learn new things about the city they live in. They see the math and science in the buildings they enter, the bridges they cross, and the parks they play in. They quickly understand why math and science are relevant to their lives. The teachers we coach become our strongest advocates and schools return to work with us year after year. In fact, over 75% of schools returned each year.

Salvadori Educators work with schools to build durable skills, engage all students, provide results that reflect high levels of ownership, and directly support educational standards through the (4) C's:

- **Collaboration** ~ working together to hypothesize, build, test, and solve problems
- **Critical thinking** ~ analyzing how and why things work
- **Creativity** ~ posing creative solutions to real-world challenges
- **Communication** ~ listening, learning, and articulating complex ideas and concepts

Our programs help schools:

- Make math, science, and the arts intellectually accessible for all learners
- Increase student comprehension and success at grade-level math and science
- Lay the foundation for future STEAM degrees and/or careers















"I think this is a great thing that Salvadori does. As a non-for-profit, city funded program, our funds are often limited in bringing quality educational programs, especially STEM related programs for minimal costs or free, and Salvadori does just that. We at South Beach were honored to be chosen for the program and the children are very impressed with themselves and their achievement of the "Big Bridge" as they call it, which has drawn quite a bit of attention as it is on display in our center lobby, and participants give the history of its making. This program gave participants not only engineering concepts, but built up their self-esteem and confidence to achieve. Thank you!"

***- Salvadori After School Teacher, UAU South Beach***

## Academic Rigor

All Salvadori curricula support grade-specific math, science, and arts concepts. Curricula are reviewed and updated to ensure STEAM concepts are current and applicable. And all our curricula align with:

- Common Core math Standards
- Next Generation Science Standards
- Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts

Throughout the year, our Educators engage in vibrant professional learning. They continually work to strengthen their teaching skills ~ pedagogy, communication, classroom management, etc. They participate in 'Deep Dive' exercises to develop their ability to teach with greater agility to different grade levels. This enables us to easily adapt STEAM concepts to real life situations; bringing STEAM life for students.

Additionally, we work with STEAM professionals to make sure that engineering and architecture concepts are aligned with industry standards. This diverse group of young professionals serve as mentors, sharing their journey, and helping students see themselves as successful in STEAM degrees and careers.

As a team, we have delivered programs in thousands of classrooms across the City ~ in schools, after-school centers, museums, and other cultural institutions. Working in such a broad cross-section of learning environments builds an unparalleled depth of knowledge and insight into what works and what doesn't.

## Salvadori's Approach

Our hands-on approach to building projects gives students an intimate and personal experience. Working collaboratively, students learn that they don't need to have all the answers; each team member contributes to a more dynamic view. The small





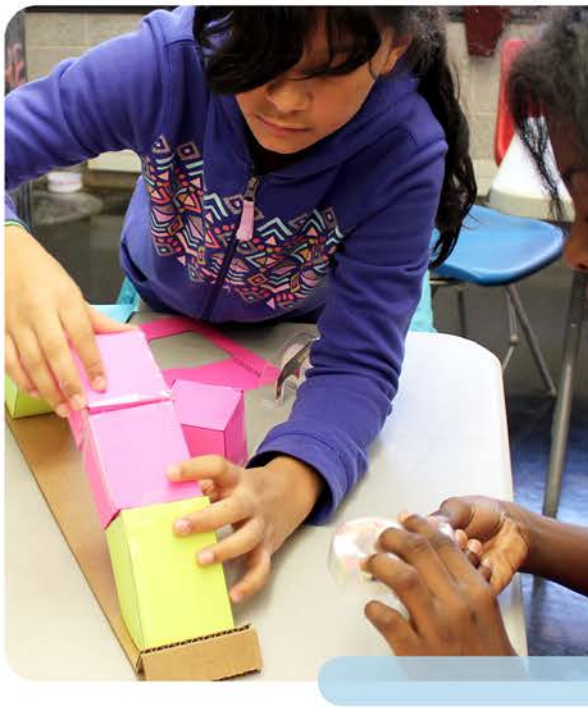












group scientific approach allows students to form hypotheses, build and test apparatus, record observations, and draw conclusions. Results are shared, discussed and analyzed with the entire class.

Each multi-day residency or program includes multiple collaborative experiments that build toward a culminating activity. Individual sessions start with a re-cap activity that reinforces the previous week's session on a higher level. This reminds students where they left off and enables those who missed the previous session to catch up. The primary activity explores new concepts with hands-on, project-based experiments. Sessions end in a brief wrap-up activity, which is often a "cliff hanger" that motivates students to engage in future sessions. Students combine the design approach to problem solving with the scientific method of experimentation to explore new concepts and solve real world problems.

*"We give students what they need to succeed, promote college and career readiness, develop critical and creative thinking skills, and reflect high levels of thinking, participation, and ownership."*

Salvadori programs help close the achievement gap for students living in poverty, such as those at NYCHA facilities. We give students what they need to succeed, promote college and career readiness, develop critical and creative thinking skills, and reflect high levels of thinking, participation, and ownership.

## A Culture of Assessment

Our main goals are to increase comprehension of STEAM concepts ~ particularly math and science ~ to help students feel more confident in their abilities, and to encourage students to pursue











***Impact in Action:***

Salvadori Educator Kaelin described the powerful impact the program had on one struggling student:

I'll never forget the day I met Erica. Her teacher told me that she was on the autism spectrum and would not be able to participate. We thought about giving her independent work. I asked if she could try – I have a special education background – and knew she could participate in some way.

I don't expect high pre-assessment scores as students haven't learned physical science concepts yet. Erica scored 27%.

Although she had a hard time communicating, Erica had amazing fine motor skills. So I appointed her as our materials manager. She measured, marked, cut, and distributed materials to each group. Erica gained a sense of purpose and began smiling. Groups that struggled appreciated her help to complete projects on time.

Erica gave her all in every session. She made friends and found she was capable of learning in a general education setting.

In the post-assessment Erica scored 97%!

***"Childrens' perception of relevance increases throughout their participation in Salvadori."***



STEAM education and career choices.

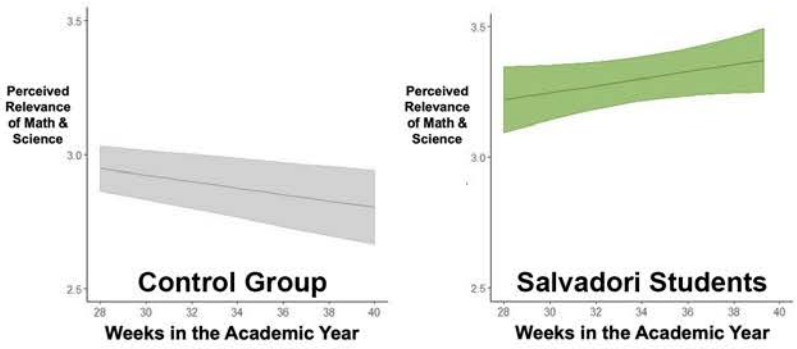
Perhaps Salvadori's greatest accomplishments over the past few years are the results of our third-party assessment reports, conducted by Youth Studies, Inc., and New York University.

Results demonstrate statistically significant increases in student ability. For eight consecutive years of Youth Studies reports, Salvadori students:

- felt more confident in their math and science ability
- were more motivated to pursue educational/career choices in STEAM fields
- improved their knowledge of math, engineering, and architecture concepts
- increased their understanding of the scientific inquiry process

And there's more good news! A preliminary study by researchers from New York University's (NYU) Department of Psychology showed promising results of Salvadori's impact on students' perception that what they learn in school is relevant to their lives. The study began with these hypotheses:

- Salvadori programs help children see how math and science are relevant to their everyday lives
- Childrens' perception of relevance increases throughout their participation in Salvadori
- This perception persists after their participation in Salvadori




Graph shows what happens after participation (for the Salvadori students) hence the initial difference in starting points.



**Salvadori measures effectiveness through a six-tiered evaluation system:**

- Principal surveys assess ties to school-wide goals
- Anonymous teacher surveys assess curricula impact and ties to classroom objectives
- Independent assessment measure changes in students' STEM comprehension
- Intensive year-long training of new Educators, including mentoring by Senior Educators
- NYC Department of Education vendor performance review system
- On-site evaluations assess the quality of instruction

Preliminary results were extremely positive:

- In general, students who didn't receive Salvadori's program showed a steady decrease in their perception that math, science, and art are relevant to their lives
- Students who received a Salvadori program showed an increase in their perception that math, science, and art was relevant
- More impressively, students who received a Salvadori program maintained a sense that what they learned is relevant several months after the program ended

The beauty is that hands-on, collaborative, project-based learning not only has a significant impact on a child's perception that math and science are relevant to their lives, but the perception of relevance stays with the child well after the program is complete – unlike students who didn't receive Salvadori.

We plan to be able to generalize the results by replicating the study over the next four academic years. The new study will follow students in two schools and measure the impact of Salvadori's programs on students who receive our curricula compared with students who don't.

Thankfully, the expanded study will be fully funded by our Board so the cost is not included in this request.

Qualitative and anecdotal data collected from classroom teachers, Salvadori Educators, and students complement and reinforce independent assessment findings. All of our assessment results are available at: **http://salvadori.org/wordpress/programs/testimonials-results**

## Serving through the Pandemic

As soon as New York City schools closed in mid-March, 2020, Salvadori Educators went into overdrive to produce versions of our curricula that could be taught remotely. This was no small feat,







considering our model has always relied on our built environment experts delivering the program directly, in the classroom, through collaborative project-based learning.

We wanted to respond and serve while staying true to our mission.

Within two weeks, we had updated and begun to distribute new versions of our hands-on lessons so that classroom teachers and new at-home educators, could continue to educate our children. From March to June, we distributed FREE project-based Salvadori lessons every week to schools in our network and worked with city officials and our funding partners to spread the word and to share these valuable resources as widely as possible. Among those who helped spread the word were our funding partners, New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer.

At the same time, our Educators began delivering lessons to our school partners via Google Meets for direct instruction, uploads via Google Classrooms to account for changing class schedules, and pre-recorded instructional videos for young students and supplemental resources.

Perhaps more importantly, in the last few months of the school year, we delivered free resources to "new home educators" across New York and beyond through:

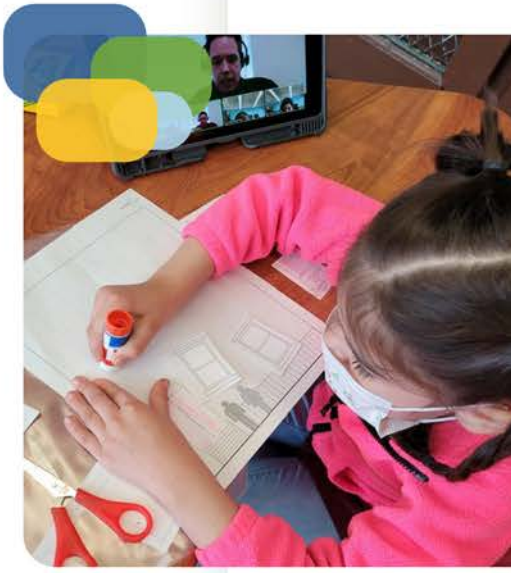
- **FREE STEAM Lessons** each week for 15 weeks ~ to over 75,000 teachers and new at-home educators
- **Instructional videos** for NYC DOE's ***Lets Learn NYC!*** on WNET THIRTEEN for 3 to 6-year-olds

By doing this, we helped teachers transition to remote/ online learning, aided families by providing educational activities they can do at home with household materials, and reached new audiences across New York City and the tri-state region.







*"This was a great experience for the kids this year. With the pandemic things have been rough. The program was done virtually and Salvadori Educator did an excellent job. She had a lot of patience with the students. Her instructions were clear and the students had no problem following them. She kept the students interested and engaged. The students looked forward to Fridays when we had the Bridges program and they were sad to see it end. It provided the students with some hands-on learning, a little diversion from our regular classwork, and a lot of encouragement and personal attention that the students need during this hard time."*

## Moving forward:

As we slowly return to normal, Salvadori is already back in the classroom. We currently offer in-person, fully remote, and blended learning for in-school, after-school, and summer programs. We expanded our partnership with NYC DOE's Lets Learn NYC! on WNET THIRTEEN to include a 20-episode series entitled My Community for 3 to 6-year-olds




## In summary, Salvadori programs:

- promote college and career readiness
- engage students through project-based exercises
- use the built environment as a vehicle for learning
- employ collaborative problem solving that involves all participants
- produce results that reflect high levels of creativity and ownership



## The Team:

Salvadori's team is as diverse as the schools we work in.

Our Educators reflect the students we serve. In fact, several were once NYC DOE students themselves and some have children currently in NYC public schools. When hiring Educators, we seek professionals who have a teaching background as well as previous professional





experience or education in related fields ~ NYC history, fine arts, design, and STEAM careers such as architecture, urban planning, engineering, construction.

Educators' backgrounds give them greater insight into our curricula and enables them to speak to our core concepts from a point of personal experience. More importantly, the diversity of our staff enables students to see themselves in their Educator ~ helping to plant the seed that they too can succeed in STEAM careers.

Our entire staff reflects the diversity that makes NYC great ~ a collection of unique voices and perspectives formed by race, gender, ethnicity, culture, age, sexual orientation, religion, and immigrant status. They know the challenges facing NYC students because they've lived it. They have been new immigrants, English Language Learners, BIPOC students, GLBTQ students, girls interested in STEAM, and so much more.

Their circumstances and experience gives them a first-hand understanding of the challenges facing NYC students today.

Full staff profiles can be found here: **https://salvadori.org/wordpress/about-us/staff/**

salvadori CENTER

*See it. Build it. Know it.*

See what is new at Salvadori by visiting our web site and following us on social media:

- **Salvadori Web Site** ~ assessment reports, resources for teachers, etc.
- **YouTube** ~ short videos of classroom projects
- **Facebook** ~ news and images of student experiences
- **LinkedIn** ~ professional relationships and networking

**Testimony for NYC Council Committee on Finance,**
**Executive Budget Hearings**
**May 25, 2021**

Good afternoon, Chair Dromm and distinguished members of the City Council. I am, Michelle DeMott and I am the Chief of Staff to Mitchell Netburn, President & CEO of Samaritan Daytop Village. I first want to thank you for your continued support during these challenging times. Samaritan Daytop Village (SDV) is a nationally-recognized human services organization that provides comprehensive services to more than 33,000 people each year through a network of over 60 facilities primarily located in the five boroughs of New York City. We depend on funding from the City Council to continue to safely provide these services to New Yorkers in need. We offer a rich array of programs including treatment for mental health issues and substance use disorder, transitional and supportive permanent housing, and innovative services for veterans, homeless individuals, women, children, youth, seniors and families.

The critical importance of mental health and substance use services has never been clearer than at this moment. It goes without saying that the pandemic is not only a physical health crisis, but a behavioral health crisis. New York City faces an unprecedented rise in the demand for behavioral health services. The clients that we serve are the most vulnerable New Yorkers, many of whom are low-to-no income with complex medical and behavioral health needs. The physical and emotional isolation as a result of the pandemic has manifested into new and increased feelings of anxiety, restlessness and stress which can be triggers for those with behavioral health and substance use disorders. As a result of the increased need for our services our organization has submitted requests to the City Council for continued funding as well as for one new initiative.

Being mindful of the City's finances, SDV has restricted our ask to the most needed service areas which have been exacerbated by the pandemic. SDV is requesting a total of $540,000 to expand and support the wide-ranging services we offer to women, children, families, veterans, and seniors/aging adults. Our request includes funding to expand a pilot for an afterschool zone, which is critically needed to address educational barriers that disproportionately affect homeless children; employment readiness and training for veterans; trauma informed services for veterans brought on by the pandemic; health education and promotion workshops to help combat the opioid epidemic;

which has been overshadowed by the pandemic; and support wellness activities for seniors and aging adults.

Specifically, we are requesting $100,000 to support an afterschool zone for school-aged homeless children to support and invest in their education. Addressing barriers faced by homeless children, at an early age, is proven to have an immense impact on breaking the cycle of homelessness. Additionally our ask includes; $300,000 to enhance our veterans employment readiness training and expand work experience, including both soft and hard vocational trainings and certifications; $100,000 to provide telehealth activities and trauma informed care trainings for both staff and clients of our veteran programs; $50,000 to expand our opioid and prevention treatment efforts in the Bronx by expanding our Narcan training and distribution program; $10,000 to support our annual wellness and health promotion workshops; and $80,000 to support wellness services and care packages for seniors at our Woodside Senior Center.

Samaritan Daytop Village is grateful for your consideration of this request. I thank you, on behalf of our agency and our clients. We look forward to continuing to be on the front lines in partnership with you and your communities serving the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

*Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition*
*http://sdrpc.mkgarden.org/*

Testimony Tuesday May 25, City Council Committee on Finance re NYC Parks Funding

Good morning.

My name is K Webster President of Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition. We've been active in this park since the late 70's when it was abandoned by the city during the fiscal crisis of that time. We are an entirely volunteer membership who have devoted our lives to ensuring this park is safe and welcoming to all and remains a place for the local community and visitors to enjoy.

It has always been a diverse park in every way: poor, working class, middle class and recently, wealthy. We have many homeless who help out thanks to the organizing efforts of Bob Humber who for four decades has anchored this park with his kindness and generosity.

During the pandemic many homeless slept here because congregate settings were not safe and there was not enough PPE to go around. The park became the only place for those in cramped apartments to get air and exercise.

We rely on one another to solve problems and are very self-sufficient. Early on in the pandemic we put signs up based on the best thinking of the NYC Health Department. When the anti-Asian violence spiked we posted signs in three languages to remind everyone that we stand with our Asian neighbors. We tend the gardens up and down the length of the park. We organize events: Juneteenth, Sukkot, Moon Festival and Pepper festivals, Halloween to bring neighbors together to honor and celebrate our diversity. We hold ladybug and firefly releases with Cornell Extension, we care for turtles and chickens and raise herbs in raised-bed gardens. We have The Hort working with local schools, we have AudubonNY building an indigenous plant demonstration garden. The former ED of the Battery Park Gardens volunteers working in our plots, The Tenement Museum staffers reinvigorated the Forsyth Conservancy Gardens, and Hua Mei bird sanctuary, the M'Finda Kalunga GreenThumb garden (after the second African Burial Ground) are volunteer tended here.

We have partnered with our City Council representative CM Chin and MBP Brewer to fund new bathrooms, to install fresh turf for soccer, for the work of The Hort and Emma Lazarus High School. They have been more than generous.

But there are some things we can't do. We have buildings that must be turned over to the community to anchor struggling sections of this park - stalled for years despite everyone agreeing it would make most sense to return parkhouses to the community. We are overrun with drug dealers who prey on the homeless and have created a heroin and fentanyl epidemic. Our hardworking local police can't keep the park safe despite arresting a key fentanyl dealer - he was out in two days. In the past few years we've had a murder, several muggings, a severe beating of an elder, a knifing last week and countless threats from those struggling with mental health issues. We have London Plane tree limbs in need of pruning that are literally crashing down - over the weekend narrowly missing a sitting couple. We have an overworked Park staff who do everything they can to keep up with trash from a large homeless population - and simply cannot. We have private organizations that have taken over sections of the park despite having no permits - and we hear of threats to anyone who dares enter or photograph them. Our bathrooms that we all fought for? Closed because they are full of used needles.

I lived on Forsyth Street in the late 70's when it was too dangerous to enter this park. And we are heading that way again. This is just about big spaces to breathe in, though that should be enough, it's about saving this park yet again for the community, the families who live here.

Thank you.
K

K Webster
President
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**Selfhelp Community Services, Inc.**
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**Testimony from Selfhelp Community Services**
**New York City Council**
**FY22 Executive Budget Public Testimony**

My name is Katie Foley and I am the Managing Director, External Affairs and Communications at Selfhelp Community Services. Thank you to Finance Committee Chair Daniel Dromm and the members of the committee for the opportunity to testify today on the FY22 Executive Budget.

Selfhelp was founded in 1936 to help those fleeing Nazi Germany maintain their independence and dignity as they struggled to forge new lives in America. Today, Selfhelp has grown into one of the largest and most respected not-for-profit human service agencies in the New York metropolitan area, with 46 program locations throughout Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Nassau County. We provide a broad set of services to more than 20,000 elderly, frail, and vulnerable New Yorkers each year, while remaining the largest provider of comprehensive services to Holocaust survivors in North America. Selfhelp offers a complete network of community-based home care, social service, and senior housing programs with the overarching goal of helping clients to live with dignity and independence and avoid institutional care.

Our services are extensive and include: specialized programs for Holocaust Survivors; eleven affordable senior housing complexes; four Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) programs; three intensive case management programs; five senior centers including one of New York City's first Innovative Senior Centers; home health care; client centered technology programs including the Virtual Senior Center; court-appointed guardianship; the Selfhelp Alzheimer's Resource Program (SHARP); and New York Connects, which provides seniors and people with disabilities with the information and support they need to remain living independently in their own homes.

We are grateful for the Council's long standing and ongoing support for so many important senior programs and for always emphasizing the needs of older adults in policy decisions and budget allocations. With strong community-based programs, we are confident that older New

Yorkers will be able to access the care and support they deserve and need to be able to age in their own homes and communities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Selfhelp has continued to serve our 20,000 elderly and vulnerable clients through our range of home and community-based programs. Our home health aides have been provided much needed at-home care, our frontline staff have been caring for individuals in the Community Guardian Program, and all of our social workers from our community-based programs, including senior centers, have been checking on their clients by phone or Zoom to ensure access to food, safe shelter, medical care, and more. We have quickly expanded our Virtual Senior Center to include members of Selfhelp's senior centers, NORCs, Case Management, and Housing in order to reduce social isolation among our clients. Our team is working every day to ensure our clients continue to live with dignity through this challenging time.

Our staff has continued to call, email, or video chat with our clients to ensure that they s have access to food, safe shelter, medical care, distanced social programs, current public health guidelines, and more. Our programs have gone virtual and telephonic. We are offering weekly social and health classes online in an effort to reduce the extreme social isolation felt by many seniors during the pandemic. In FY22 we are prepared to continue providing our services remotely or transition to in-person programs once it is considered safe by NYC and DFTA. Our team is working every day to ensure our clients continue to live with dignity through this challenging time.

**FY22 Budget**

Selfhelp is appreciative of the investments included in the Executive Budget to both better support older New Yorkers through programs such as Senior Centers, as well as to support the human services sector at large. More specifically, we are deeply appreciative of the decision to fully restore funding for the Indirect Cost Rate initiative; implement the $10 million of outstanding model Senior Center budget funding promises; and include $39.4 million towards Senior Centers and NORCs. These investments are an important step towards bolstering a system that has been critical to supporting older New Yorkers through the historically difficult fight against COVID-19.

However, given that the Department for the Aging (DFTA) budget remains at less than ½ of 1% of the City budget despite older adults representing a rapidly increasing 20% of the population, the City must go farther in its Adopted Budget to truly set the trajectory for a recovery that leaves no New Yorker behind.

Centered around the inequities made apparent during the pandemic, we support three major

investments to better address senior hunger, the digital divide, and wages for essential workers.

1. $16.6 million for Home-delivered Meals. Such funding would provide $13.6 million for weekday meals and $3 million for weekend and holiday meals, both to increase capacity to meet new demand and bring the per-meal rate to the national average. The home-delivered meals program, which is different from GetFood, serves older New Yorkers who, due to chronic illness, mobility limitation, or disability, will remain homebound long after COVID-19 fully subsides. For many meal recipients, this meal delivery represents not only a significant source of nutrients, but the only contact they will have with the outside world that day.

2. $4.4 Million to address the digital divide. $4.4 million of this funding would allow for improved technology and service access for older adults by investing in the technology infrastructure at older adult centers, as well as directly supporting individual access to technology.

3. $48 Million Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for essential human services workers. Throughout COVID-19, human services workers across sectors have stepped up to provide critical services in new ways, including to keep New Yorkers older New Yorkers fed, assist older adults in receiving vaccinations, and combating the life-threatening effects of social isolation. Despite this, the wages of these workers, the majority of whom are women and Black and brown individuals, are slated to remain stagnant. It is critical that the budget rectify this, allocating $48 million in funding to ensure all human services workers can receive a 3% COLA.
    a. $1.7 million is needed to ensure parity for NORC Directors and Older Adult Center staff.

Recognizing the significant role that City Council discretionary plays in meeting the hyper-local needs within districts, these funds must also be restored to FY20 levels and bolstered as appropriate, including by restoring $2,040,000 that was previously made available through the "Healthy Aging" initiative.

**Selfhelp Budget Priorities**

In today's testimony, I will focus on Selfhelp's budget priorities.

**Holocaust Survivor Initiative**

This year, we are urging the City Council to renew this initiative, with continued support for Selfhelp and our Holocaust Survivor Program. As the largest provider of comprehensive

services to survivors in North America, Selfhelp Community Services is uniquely positioned to assist this last generation of survivors. We are urging the City Council to renew this initiative, with continued support for Selfhelp and our Holocaust Survivor Program. This funding supports Selfhelp's direct social services to frail, isolated, and financially needy Holocaust Survivors.

The need is immense. Half of the approximately 5,300 survivors served by Selfhelp live at or below the poverty line. And though the number of survivors is declining, the needs of the remaining population are more intense and costly.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Selfhelp social workers have been providing the specialized care that survivors deserve due to the trauma they experienced during the Holocaust. There are many unique struggles survivors face today: the isolation, the return of memories of hiding, rationing food, being away from family, as well as sickness and death. They are also among the most vulnerable and susceptible to this disease. This funding supports Selfhelp social workers who are reducing social isolation through frequent phone calls and assisting with needs such as food, bill pay, and more. Because of this funding, survivors are not alone.

We are grateful for the City's ongoing commitment to this population, even in difficult budget years. For FY22, Selfhelp is seeking funding from the Initiative to support direct social services to frail, isolated and financially needy Holocaust survivors and our Holocaust education program, Witness Theater.

This commitment allows us to turn the words "never forget" into action, and the City's investment helps us serve this population so they can continue to age with independence and dignity.

**Senior Transportation Program**

We are seeking to expand our established transportation program that provides free round-trip transportation to medical appointments for seniors living in Queens. With support from Council Member Paul Vallone and the Queens Delegation, Selfhelp has operated a senior transportation program that provides free transportation to and from medical appointments for five years.

Before the COVID pandemic we were seeing the need for transportation growing each year. The pandemic has significantly increased the need for safe, private transportation options for older adults. This program includes offering transportation to vaccine appointments and we expect to serve many seniors this winter and spring who need assistance getting to and from

their vaccination site. Due to the demand for accessible transportation and popularity of this program we believe that there is a need for increased funding for transportation programs.

Based on feedback received by individuals who benefitted from the program, as well as the demand for services, we know that the program improves quality of life for older New Yorkers, as it eliminates concerns about transportation costs, traveling alone, and navigating public transit. Further, in transportation deserts in parts of NYC and Queens in particular, this program removed a significant barrier for older adults in caring for their health.

Transportation programs have become a lifeline for older Queens residents who are responding to COVID-19 social distancing requirements by avoiding public transportation. This program ensures that older adults have affordable, accessible, and reliable transportation services to their medical appointments.

**Virtual Senior Center**

For seniors who are homebound—particularly during the current global health pandemic—Selfhelp's Virtual Senior Center (VSC) is a vital source of face-to-face social interaction. The VSC enables homebound seniors to participate virtually in intriguing live classes, tour world famous museums, interact with peers, engage in wellness activities, and most importantly expand their social network.

Developed ten years ago, the Virtual Senior Center (VSC) has been a trailblazer in meeting the needs of homebound older adults in NYC while combating social isolation. We believe that the Virtual Senior Center can become a lifeline for the thousands of vulnerable older New Yorkers currently isolated at home.

Selfhelp considers it vital to address social isolation – not only because it has a dramatic impact on quality of life in older adults, but also because isolation has been linked to poorer health outcomes including higher blood pressure, greater susceptibility to the flu and other infectious diseases, earlier onset of dementia, and shorter life span.

While the Virtual Senior Center was designed with homebound seniors in mind, the definition of homebound has changed dramatically since the COVID-19 pandemic. Suddenly we all have a new understanding of what it means to be isolated from friends and family and only connected through a screen. Those once able to travel to their local Selfhelp senior center or participate in activities are now unable to do so. Even as vaccinations increase and restrictions lift, more people and older adult communities are looking towards virtual programming as a hybrid or sole option. Our Virtual Senior Center (VSC) has truly become a lifeline. Over 850 older adults are logging on to the Virtual Senior Center for lessons, discussions, and

socializing, all from the safety of their homes. Margo's story explains the importance of the VSC:

*Margo is a member of our Benjamin Rosenthal Prince Street Innovative Senior Center, who is now participating in the VSC. Though she misses her Senior Center friends and the activities she enjoyed there, including ping pong, fitness classes, and tai chi, she is grateful to be able to fill her schedule with programming from our Virtual Senior Center. Margo shared, "I look at the [VSC] calendar every day to see what's going on...I appreciate everything Selfhelp has been doing."*

Participants use a personal computer to log into the VSC where they review the weekly class calendar. In each class, all participants can see, hear, and speak to each other in real time. Classes are offered in English, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, Spanish, and Korean. The VSC platform has the ability to engage homebound older adults at home while increasing their social network.

> *Monica H., a Chinese speaking VSC member from Benjamin Rosenthal Prince Street Innovative Senior Center shares, "In the past few months, we had Open Chat every day between 6-7 pm where we can socialize and support each other. It really gives a lot of support and comfort during the challenging time."*

The VSC also offers community groups and organizations the technology and guidance needed to efficiently connect to and deliver their classes and services virtually to their populations, and to do it within an easy to manage and secure platform.

**Older Adult Centers (Senior Centers) and Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) Request for Proposals**

We are very appreciative of the consistent support the NORC program has received in the City Council. Because of your enthusiasm for this program, we have been able to bring resources and attention to the needs of a large and rapidly growing senior population served by Selfhelp's NORCs. Without the support of the City Council many NORC programs would not be able to continue to provide critical services to so many older adults in New York City.

New York City is entering a critical phase of the recovery, and the senior services network is focused on vaccine outreach, continuing emergency food distribution, and engaging a senior population as they prepare to return to in-person activities, as well as the recent RFP. We support the call to:

- Further extend the Older Adult Center & NORC RFP submission date to allow providers adequate time to respond to the request
- Provide a model budget for both Older Adult Centers, Network OACs, and NORCs

- Provide greater clarity on the NORC portion of the RFP
- Include COLAs, cost escalators, greater indirect funding, and a mechanism to ensure that providers can receive more funds should they serve more people
- Release the community assessments and information gathered to inform the RFP

During COVID-19, Selfhelp's senior center and NORC social workers have been connected to their members through phone calls, emails, and video chats. Our social workers are providing essential services helping older adults access food, medicine, and resources to maintain their mental and physical health, such as Selfhelp's Virtual Senior Center. These activities were crucial prior to COVID-19 and have become even more important since the start of the pandemic.

Selfhelp provides social services to residents at four Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs), including one Neighborhood NORC throughout Queens and services at five senior centers, including an innovative senior center and one located in NYCHA housing.

Thank you for your ongoing support for senior centers and NORC programs.

**The Need for Affordable Housing**

Selfhelp is a major provider of affordable housing for seniors in New York City and on Long Island. Our housing portfolio includes twelve affordable apartment developments, located in Queens, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Long Island, which provide housing to close to 1,500 low- and moderate-income senior residents in attractive, functional apartments with social services available, as needed.

Selfhelp appreciates the strong support of Mayor de Blasio and the City Council for senior affordable housing in New York City. The need for affordable senior housing with services remains as or more significant today as it was in 2016, when LiveOn NY first reported their findings that an estimated 200,000 seniors were on waiting lists for housing through the HUD202 program in New York City. In fact, housing challenges continue to plague older adults, as many seniors live on fixed incomes that cannot keep pace with rising rents; experience mobility challenges that limit housing options within an aging rental-stock; and are found to have high rates of rent burden, with ⅓ of individuals receiving SCRIE paying more than 70% of their income on rent. Given the current need for senior affordable housing, Selfhelp recommends that the City ensure that senior housing is prioritized in its overall development pipeline.

**Affordable Senior Housing as a Tool for Healthcare: SHASAM**

An investment in the SHASAM (Selfhelp's Active Services for Aging Model) would result in savings to the State's Medicaid program by preventing or lowering costs of emergency room visits and keeping low-income seniors out of costlier levels of care, such as assisted living or nursing homes.

At each Selfhelp building, we offer service coordination through SHASAM, which makes available social work services, education, and recreation, as well as referrals to skilled nursing and home care, if and when requested by the resident. The goal of SHASAM is to provide the appropriate level of assistance to allow older adults to remain in their apartments and not move to more costly settings such as assisted living or nursing homes. Recent research shows that access to SHASAM allows older adults to reduce their chances of being hospitalized and/or visiting an emergency room which reduced their overall Medicaid and/or Medicare costs.

During COVID-19, Selfhelp's SHASAM social workers are maintaining contact with residents through phone and video. In partnership with LiveOn NY and philanthropic support, Selfhelp housing arranged meal distribution to residents who were facing food insecurity because they were not signed up for meal delivery or home care services. These essential services, and more, are keeping older adults healthy and at home during this health pandemic.

A New York-based study, conducted by Dr. Michael Gusmano of Rutgers University, compared Selfhelp residents with access to service coordination to a comparison group of seniors in the same zip codes without this support. The published research shows that residents of Selfhelp's housing are healthier than their neighbors who do not live in high-quality housing.

Research shows that residents in Selfhelp's affordable housing had:

- 68% lower odds of Selfhelp residents being hospitalized
- $1,778 average Medicaid payment per person, per hospitalization for Selfhelp residents, versus
  $5,715 for the comparison group
- 53% lower odds of a Selfhelp resident visiting an emergency room compared to a non-Selfhelp resident

The full report is available through the Journal for Health Affairs (the article is available upon request), and a white paper published by Selfhelp is available at www.selfhelp.net.

**COLA**

The human services sector stepped up to meet the need of New Yorkers in crisis and it's critical for the Adopted FY22 budget to include restoration of ICR funding as well as these two investments in the human services workers:

- The restoration of the COLA on the personnel services line of all human services contracts at a rate of 3% at a cost of $48 million for FY22.
- A plan for the administration to promote wage equity in the public sector by correcting the pay disparities the human services workforce experience, as outlined in the City Council's FY22 Preliminary Budget Response.

**Conclusion**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. New York's more than 1.8 million older adults are counting on these investments to demonstrate meaningful action for aging in response to COVID-19. On behalf of the 20,000 clients we serve, I am grateful for the Council's support on so many important programs.

Testimony of Metropolitan Parent Center, Sinergia Inc. for New York City Council Committee on Finance

Re: Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget

May 25, 2021

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you about the Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget. My name is Paola Jordan, and I am the co-director of the Metropolitan Parent Center at Sinergia, one of the three federally funded Parent Training and Information Centers in our city. We provide training and information to families of children with disabilities, as well as the professionals that work with them. Our parent center is also a member of the ARISE Coalition.

I am also the parent of 13-year-old twins, both are in seventh grade and attended a community school in D3, my daughter is autistic, and my son has a learning disability.

However, I am here speaking on behalf of our parent center and the families its serves. I would like to discuss the need to invest in effective reading curricula and small group reading support in NYC schools.

Our public schools struggled to meet the academic needs of students long before the coronavirus pandemic, where less than 50% of students were reading proficiently[1]. During the last FY, all the families who have contacted our parent center looking for guidance included school age kids who are struggling in school. We observed that the students are on average at least two grades behind academically, their IEP's do not have clear language about evidence-based reading curricula, and there is not additional support offered to the families. The only option they have to access additional services that will help their kids to close the academic gap, is to pursue an impartial hearing, something that is difficult, especially if the family does not speak English and/or does not have representation.

We would like to thank the City Council for recommending $50 million for new reading curricula in your response to the budget. The Mayor's budget proposal has $500 million for academic recovery and student supports but has no information about how this money will be used. Please make sure the final budget includes at least $50 million for evidence-based reading curriculum so that teachers have the materials they need to teach students to read in the first place and at least $150 million to provide one-

[1] New York State Test Results: New York City Grades 3-8, August 2019 https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2019-math-ela---website---8-22-19.pdf

on-one or small-group intervention to students who need more help learning to read from staff who have training in approaches that work.

Thank you,

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*fighting predatory equity and tenant harassment*

# STABILIZING NYC

*organizing nyc tenants for the right to stay in our homes and communities*

# FY 2022 Initiative Funding Request For $3,080,000

During this unprecedented crisis, Stabilizing NYC Coalition groups have been a life-line for tens of thousands of NYC families. Over the last 7 years, Council funding has allowed us to create and strengthen vast networks of tenant associations across all five boroughs. These families now turn to us as trusted, multilingual community groups to know their rights and access critical resources. Our organizing work is essential to keep NYC families safely in their homes and to address the pre-existing disparities the pandemic has so clearly exposed to the world.

**Stabilizing NYC requests $3,080,000 in City Council initiative funding** for the eighth year of our highly successful program to combat harassment, evictions and the loss of affordable housing at the hands of predatory equity investors. The work of keeping tenants safely in their homes and building community power has never been more critical! Organizers and attorneys are speaking with hundreds of tenants about their rights and resources they can access. **Organizing is essential to keep communities safe and to address the unjust impacts on the communities we organize.**

## STABILIZING NYC MEMBERS:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Manhattan:** | CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities ● Cooper Square Committee ● Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES) ● Housing Conservation Coordinators ● Met Council on Housing |
| **Bronx:** | Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA) – New Settlement Apartments ● Mothers on the Move ● Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition ● Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association |
| **Brooklyn:** | Fifth Avenue Committee ● Flatbush Tenant Coalition ● IMPACCT Brooklyn ● Neighbors Helping Neighbors ● St. Nicks Alliance ● Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB) |
| **Queens:** | Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE) ● Catholic Migration Services ● Chhaya CDC ● Woodside on the Move |
| **Citywide:** | TakeRoot Justice |

*www.stabilizingnyc.org* *@stabilizingnyc*

Last year, the City Council generously awarded us $3,000,000 to continue our work, allowing us to expand to upper Manhattan and South Brooklyn. Critical to maintaining the program, we are looking to

bring all of our coalition members up to the same standards of compensation. This year, we are seeking a slight (2.67%) increase to bring our newest Coalition members on par with the existing members and to ensure the organizing amounts are the same for all the Coalition partners. With the additional increase of $80,000 we can protect more homes, win more building improvements and strengthen community organizing across the City.

Each year, Stabilizing NYC groups form and strengthen hundreds of tenant associations as well as coalitions of tenants across landlord and bank portfolios. Thousands of families learn their rights as tenants and fight back collectively against disrepair, buyouts, evictions and all forms of harassment and displacement. We organize Low English Proficiency tenants in 16 different languages. We target some of the worst Predatory Equity landlords and the banks that finance them. We counsel hundreds of tenants on landlord-tenant issues, and annually represent over 200 tenants in litigation against abusive landlords.

Our work results in a **better and well-maintained NYC housing stock that's kept affordable for our working-class families**. Tenant organizing creates communities where people with varying levels of vulnerability or marginalization, including immigration status, support each other.

While our organizing work helped secure the $2.3 billion in rent relief, there is still much more to be done. As we recover from the pandemic, evictions, displacement and widespread homelessness loom on the horizon. The eviction moratorium is set to expire on May 1. We expect a massive flood of eviction cases as families struggle to pay their rent. Article after article, as well as our own experiences with our tenants, report that at least 750,000 families in NYS have not paid rent since this crisis began.

Organizing is absolutely necessary to ensure that tenants who most need it are able to access the rent relief that is coming. As our experience with a $60M state run program has shown, there are significant disparities in who can access and apply for rent relief in NYC. In addition, identity theft and financial scams promising access to rent relief will intensify. Community organizing and outreach through TRUSTED networks will be critical to ensuring that when rent relief finally arrives, tenants facing language, technological, and other barriers are able to access the available rent relief and avoid eviction.

At the same time, after more than a year of tenants being unable to pay rent, we are seeing an increase in repair issues that endanger families' health and safety. Leaks and mold, as well as rodents and pests -- with the respiratory and immunological health problems they create -- are especially insidious as we struggle out of the COVID pandemic.

Finally, **housing justice is racial justice**. Decades of government disinvestment in communities of color has been exacerbated by redlining, speculation, and overleveraging. Landlords continue to benefit from systemic racism by going unpunished, face little accountability, and are rewarded for their negligent behavior. Landlords wield power over communities through denial of services, neglect repairs, illegal construction, etc and are rarely held accountable by city and state agencies. Private equity companies and spectators are working every day to find "opportunities" in this crisis as they commodify housing and seek to displace our communities for their profit.

Our work as Stabilizing NYC will continue prioritizing and empowering tenants to fight for their rights in the courts and the street (social distancing of course)**;** analyzing landlord behavior and trends; working on fair and reformative housing and lending policies; building new models of community ownership and preventing eviction that will preserve the communities we cherish as a city.

# City Council Testimony–Executive Budget Hearings 5/25/2021–Virtual Rm 2
# From Susan Fenley, Executive Director of Sundog Theatre in Staten Island

I'm Susan Fenley, the executive director of Sundog Theatre in Staten Island. We are in our 19th year providing arts programs to Staten Island and NYC. Our 4 components are: 1) original and contemporary theatre; 2) arts education in over 40 Staten Island and Brooklyn schools providing theatre, dance, art, and music to K-12th grades to help learning come alive through the arts; 3) touring productions to large venues on social issues (bullying, smoking, drug abuse) and educational topics (Ellis Island, Harriet Tubman, Young Abe Lincoln); and 4) acting classes for youth 9 – 17 years old.

This past year, education has suffered in NYC. The pandemic forced children and teachers to communicate solely online. As a result, many students have barely scraped through the learning process unscathed - by disinterest, loss of human contact, and lack of connection. Even children with a stay-at-home parent and adequate technology are burned out and longing once again for school. Not to mention parents that have to mentor children and also work. Who thought kids would ever clamor to go back to school and parents long to return to the workplace? Through this lost year of education, children will need to recover personally and educationally.

After delivering arts programs to children for nearly two decades, I have seen the healing and educational value of arts when coupled with the educational process. We see shy students shine and become confident through participating in theatre. We see dance energize children and make them physically strong while teaching them about how different cultures throughout the world express themselves. Additionally, it is apparent that art and music not only show young people how the masters used these artistic mediums to create beauty, but how children can learn to express themselves and create original works as well.

This past year, the arts in NYC have suffered more than any other field. Theatres, museums, and music houses were shuttered. Arts in schools were – in many instances – completely taken away or curtailed due to budget cuts or because schools didn't have the bandwidth to deliver 'extra' programming.

The arts are not extraneous to the education process. They ARE the education process. Children learn not only through reading and lecture; they learn through doing. The "process" part of education is inherent in the arts. Children/people learn best when they apply their newly learned knowledge through a project, as they do in arts classes. For instance, if a kid hates math, yet learns how it is used in constructing something or in dance, it becomes <u>useful</u> and not just an educational exercise. Or, if students act out a time in history, they remember how they felt and why it happened. It becomes personal, not something that happened eons ago. <u>Because the arts make education come alive for kids, they retain the lessons</u>.

Additionally, the Social/Emotional learning children absorb through arts participation gives them the skills to collaborate, speak in public, question why, learn self-management, and more. These "soft" skills are anything but soft. They are life skills and give children confidence. Any teacher will tell you that a confident child relates better to people and learns more effectively. And, they are more fulfilled.

Sundog Theatre asks for the following: 1) reinstate City Council Initiatives – CASA, Cultural Immigrant, Art a Catalyst for Change, SU-CASA, and CTC to FY 20 (pre-Covid) budget levels; 2) Add $5M to DCLA's budget to increase its capacity to support grants administration. Please see page 2 for further info. Thank you.

There is no real recovery without the arts, and NYC is the arts capital of the US. Please help support this recovery by supporting the arts, now and always. They are part of the City's economic growth engine and a way to a healthier (social and economic) society here.

## Cultural Plan For Recovery (CPR) TOTAL ASK: $70M

**New York City's cultural community and those it employs and serves continue to grapple with the economic losses COVID brought. There is no recovery without the arts, and the below package ensures the City invests in this community in an equitable way that best reaches those people, programs, and organizations who need support and can lead the sector forward.**

**$15M** - Cultural Equity Fund - Fund created as a way of investing in BIPOC led / BIPOC serving cultural organizations in order to establish better equity in arts and cultural funding. There has long been a call to create a funding landscape in NYC with a robust effort to more equitably support organizations of color. This fund answers that call and this moment.

**$30M** - Restoration of funding historically added at Adoption split 50/50 between CIGs and CDF funded program groups with a carve-out for CUNY Corps. This demonstrates a restoration of $20.2M from FY21 and an additional $9.8 investment to bring this funding back to prior levels. Also asking the Council for a full restoration of all initiatives, including the baselining of Coalition Theaters of Color.

**$5M** - Added to DCLA's budget to increase its capacity to support this investment in New York City's arts and cultural community.

**$10M** - Funding for non-profit performing arts, to keep them solvent while they remain shuttered and to support their additional cost when they can reopen. The nonprofit performing arts are uniquely harmed by the pandemic; they were the first to close and will be the last to reopen, and were largely shut out of State aid for for-profit performing arts venues. When these institutions are able to reopen, we anticipate that audiences will be greatly diminished—typically 80% full is the break-even point—and we will incur significant new costs to open safely (such as rapid testing of staff and artists and protocols like CLEAR for audiences). Short term relief will help this sector through this period. Funding should be commensurate with organization size to be meaningful.

**$10M** - Fund to invest in cultural groups in neighborhoods and communities hardest hit by COVID. Relief grants available to cultural organizations of every size to help them stabilize and recover from the economic devastation of COVID. This fund will target arts and culture groups and independent artists located in and/or doing work in communities hardest hit by COVID - determined by zip codes that had the highest infection and highest death tolls. It can also mean groups and artists in the disabled community who suffered disproportionately. The goal is to save the most vulnerable organizations, most at risk of closing, whose services are the most needed in these neighborhoods which had the fewest cultural assets before COVID.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Ryan Castalia. I serve as the Executive Director of Sure We Can, which operates NYC's only nonprofit redemption center. We serve canners--those who collect bottles and cans to earn income. It has been and continues to be my privilege to work amongst a community of extraordinary diversity, remarkable resilience, and profound uniqueness. Canners are freelance, community-level recyclers, pioneers in the circular economy and climate change resiliency, whose indefatigable work makes our lives measurably better: canning reduces street litter by over 70%, results in the diversion of over 200,000 tons of recyclables annually across the state at no cost to taxpayers, and in the case of our organization, supports the livelihoods of 950 families through the distribution of over $700,000 annually into the community.

Despite these undeniable contributions, New York City seems to prefer canners work in the shadows. Canners represent an intersection of many severely underserved demographics: undocumented immigrants, non-English-speakers, and people of color, as well as those experiencing physical or mental disabilities or homelessness. Many are elderly. Everyone in New York City knows what the canners do. Most recognize the canners that work in their neighborhood. Yet these same canners we know to be integral to our communities work in the face of constant stigma, including racism and fear of assault, lack of basic labor protections including unemployment insurance or access to pandemic relief, and indifference to their humanity, dignity, and agency via the faceless advance of gentrification that pushes them even farther toward the margins. Today, that force takes the form of our community living under threat of eviction from the space we have called home for over a decade. I am here to demand that the city recognize the value of the canner community by supporting our request for capital funding to purchase our property and protect our community from dispersal and destruction.

Sure We Can was founded by canners, for canners, and has built a reputation and capacity for service that is unique in our city and state. Only at Sure We Can can canners find compassionate community, space for their work protected from the elements, and guarantees of fair and transparent service. We provide community development programming including leadership and advocacy training. We partner with mutual aid groups and foundations to provide food, clothing, cash relief, and facilitate access to social services. We have even worked with the city to improve 2020 Census response and conduct Covid-19 outreach including the distribution of tens of thousands of face coverings and other PPE. Again, despite these measurable contributions, we have heard that our application cannot continue because we lack three consecutive years of direct city contracts of over $50,000. This, despite the fact that no such contracts exist for the work that canners and Sure We Can perform. This logic, even as many in the city government proclaim the need to invest in communities, in the marginalized, in sustainability and the circular economy, is self-defeating and absurd.

We want to believe our leaders are serious about transforming the status quo, and building a more supportive and sustainable city for all New Yorkers. Many in the Council have already indicated their support, including Sanitation Chair Antonio Reynoso and Finance Chair Daniel Dromm. In that spirit, we call upon the Speaker and the Council to do the right thing, and aggressively push for an Economic Development Exemption for Sure We Can to the city

contracting requirement for capital funding. Please help us secure our future and the future of this important work.

Hello Speaker Johnson, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Camila Salvagno. I am the Community Development Program Coordinator at Sure We Can. We are a not-for-profit redemption center; a place where folks who collect bottles and cans are able to exchange these recyclable materials for money. We serve a large population of majority full-time, independent expert recyclers known as canners, and also, folks doing this work part-time, that have discovered a spontaneous source of income in New York City. Sure We Can offers two vital services. First, we provide canners with an economic possibility of life in a city where so many are excluded from entering the "formal economy". Second, our canners provide a service to New York City, by reducing litter, contributing to current sustainability efforts, and ultimately beautifying the cityscape. Sure We Can provides to all the possibility of survival.

Speaker Johnson, if you were to step foot onto our lot you would see an efficient and highly productive recycling operation, built and run by canners without any assistance from the city's legislation. You would feel a tight- knit community that operates under the ethos of acceptance and protection. And you would witness the outcome of over a decade's worth of irreplaceable community outreach that is threatened to be displaced due to the circumstances we are here to discuss.

Today, over 900 canners bring their recyclable materials to Sure We Can annually. Thanks to their hard work, over 10 million bottles and cans are redeemed annually, that otherwise could have ended up in the landfill or in our water. Canners spend their days on foot, we all see them, navigating the bumpy terrain of the city with their carts full of containers. I feel a great sense of relief knowing that after a long day of this hard work, canners can arrive at Sure We Can and be met with a welcoming environment, space to comfortably sort their materials, access to donations of food and clothing, and also PPE.

Speaker Johnson, we ask that you support our efforts to keep Sure We can intact. We need An Economic Development Exemption to the city contract requirement in order to continue our pursuits of Capital Funding. The ability to purchase our lot would quell the anxiety of our community. It is time that New York City recognize the canner community by protecting Sure We Can from destruction.

Good morning/afternoon. My name is Chicago Crosby. I'm a canner. That means I collect and redeem bottles and cans to earn income. I'm also the co-Chair of the Board of Directors of Sure We Can, New York City's only nonprofit organization dedicated to serving the canning community. Our mission is to uplift and empower marginalized people by providing services, support, and opportunities that many simply aren't able to access otherwise. We also serve the needs of the broader community and the planet. In 2020 we distributed over 100,000 face masks in Bushwick and Williamsburg and diverted more than 10 million bottles and cans from the waste stream that otherwise would have ended up on our streets, in our landfills, or in our oceans.

Covid-19 has been an unprecedented trial for all New Yorkers and has had a disproportionate impact on already-marginalized people. I'd like to praise the dedicated, determined, and passionate elected officials and government officers and workers who have done so much to keep our special city alive during this terrible crucible. Thank you all! But you can't do it all alone: now, more than ever, New York City needs organizations like Sure We Can. We are here and ready to work with the city government to support communities in crisis. During the pandemic, canner incomes were decimated. Sure We Can has been a refuge for the communities hardest-hit: low-income, minority, and immigrant groups. We distribute PPE, provide multilingual educational material about Covid-19, and serve as a testing site, in addition to distributing food and warm clothing to those in need.

Through it all, Sure We Can has been and continues to be a pioneer in the circular economy, merging environmental awareness with economic empowerment. And yet, we find our work and livelihood under threat by the gentrifying forces with which most New Yorkers are all too familiar. At our center, where we have worked for over a decade to build trust, community, and the capacity to serve, we face eviction if we can't purchase our lot. As a small organization, built from the ground up by canners determined to transform their situation, we don't have the resources or connections to purchase the lot outright, so are asking the city for help. We've heard that capital funding cannot be provided without three consecutive years of over $50,000 in city contracts. And yet, there are no existing city contracts for the crucial work that we have been performing for over a decade. Though other organizations have received exemptions to this requirement, we have been refused without justification. So, we ask: will the New York City government allow us to collapse simply for the sake of bureaucratic red tape?

*Only if there is time:*

The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on already-marginalized people has been exhaustively demonstrated by statistics and research. As one of the most diverse cities in the world, New York now has both the opportunity and the obligation to observe these disparities and rectify them by actively investing in the marginalized, in environmental justice, sustainability, and the circular economy, including and especially investment in the preservation of industrial spaces like Sure We Can.

**Testimony for May 25 Budget Hearing**

Today, I ask the New York City Council to support the capital funding request for **Sure We Can**, the only organization in the City that works in the areas of **environmental justice, litter reduction, material recycling, and individual economic empowerment in NYC**. Sure We Can is located in Bushwick Brooklyn, and it advocates for protections for the estimated 10,000 canners throughout all 5 boroughs. Canners are people who collect cans and bottles, 5 cents at a time.

Sure We Can was founded by canners and continues to be led by canners. Like many New Yorkers, canners are a diverse group. The overwhelming majority of the 900 canners who are affiliated with Sure We Can are immigrants and low-income.

- Sure We Can is much more than a bottle redemption center.
- Sure We Can generates green jobs and hosts educational visits for K-12 and college students as well as adult volunteers.
- Sure We Can is a community space and a safe space for canners to do work that is often stigmatized and done in the shadows.
- In 2020 Sure We Can was awarded a grant from NYC and CUNY to conduct census outreach to hard to reach people.
- And since last March, Sure We Can has distributed more than 100,000 face masks to community members, served as a COVID-19 testing and vaccine site, and distributed multilingual educational material to canners, their family members, and community members as part of the Test and Trace Initiative.

**For these reasons and more, I ask that you please support Sure We Can's request for capital funding to purchase the lot that it has leased for over 10 years.** The loss of Sure We Can's space, and thereby its community, would be the **loss of over a decade of specialized and irreplaceable outreach to a socially and economically marginalized group of people.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Chris Hartmann, PhD
Co-President, Executive Board, Sure We Can

{Español}
Hola mi nombre es Josefa Marin, soy una recicladora, y formo parte de la junta directiva de Sure We Can. Quiero dirigirme a ustedes, portavoz Corey Johnson y el concejo municipal, quienes pueden darnos el apoyo que necesitamos para comprar el lote. Sure We Can es un único espacio comunitario en la comunidad de Brooklyn. Es como una segunda casa para muchos de nosotros. Aquí hacemos pasar un momento agradable para la gente de la tercera edad. Hacemos sentirnos como en casa. Si nos tuviéramos que ir de este espacio, sería un pérdida total para la comunidad.

Este espacio lo hemos hecho nuestro con la gente de Bushwick. Aquí hacemos eventos, convivimos con todo el vecindario. Es bien importante para nosotros tener un espacio para disfrutar. En Sure We Can podemos estar tranquilos, y no en la calle. Sin este centros nos quitaran un espacio muy valioso, para las personas de tercera edad como también para los recicladores. Es el único espacio donde nos tratan bien. Estamos super agradecidos con la gente que trabaja aquí. De manera encarecida por favor que nos apoyen para obtener este espacio. Espero que sí escuchen mi testimonio, lo tomen en cuenta. Gracias por su atención.

{English}
Hello my name is Josefa Marin. I am a canner and I am a part of the board of directors to Sure We Can. I want to turn to all of you, Speaker Corey Johnson and the City Council, those who can provide us the support we need to purchase the lot. Sure We Can is a unique community space in the Brooklyn community. It is like a second home for many of us. Here we create a pleasant time for senior citizens. We make them feel at home. If we were to have to leave this place, it would be a total loss to the community.

With the people of Bushwick, we have made this space our own. Here we do events, we get along with the whole neighborhood. It is very important for us to have a space to enjoy ourselves in. At Sure We Can we can be at ease, and not out on the street. Without this center, we would be without a very valuable space, for the elderly as well as for canners. It is the only place where we are all treated well. We are very grateful to the people who work here. I urge you to support us as we try to obtain the space. I hope you do listen to my testimony and take it all into consideration. Thank you for your attention.

{Español}
Portavoz Corey Johnson y el Concejo Municipal, expreso mis más sinceros saludos. Mi nombre es Rene del Carmen. Hace más de 7 años que trabajo en Sure We Can como representante del centro de canjeo. Antes yo era un reciclador en Manhattan por muchos años. Paso a lo siguiente cómo ser humano. La vida que tengo en NYC me ha hecho conocer las muchas necesidades de nuestra comunidad Neoyorkina. Conociendo las calles, y a diferentes personas, recuerdo hace casi más de una década nació Sure We Can, el único centro de canjeo sin ánimo de lucro en la ciudad de Nueva York. Además de ser un centro de canje, ofrecemos actividades de jardinería y compost, y proyectos para estudiantes que impulsan el desarrollo comunitario. Así mismo ayudamos a más de 900 personas a vender sus materiales reciclables, desarrollando una economía para ellos para que puedan cumplir sus gastos de vivencia- y claro, desviamos el plástico del mar y los ríos para ayudar al medio ambiente. También, así se está ahorrando el gasto de un tanto por ciento en barriles de petróleo.

Soy testigo del poder de nuestros líderes. Hoy estoy aquí para que todos ustedes puedan escucharme. Yo no soy poderoso ni de corbata pero si un ciudadano como muchos de mis compañeros. Hemos visto miles de toneladas de plástico, vidrio y aluminio todo reciclado. Miramos la enorme fuerza hecha por Sure We Can para ayudar al medio ambiente, así como me apoyan y a la comunidad de Brooklyn. Muchos de nosotros como a muchos en la vida tenemos problemas que ningún doctor ha podido curar, pero el hecho de reciclar en las calles se ha vuelto como terapia psicológica. Se siente uno más útil para nuestra sociedad. Nosotros no fabricamos dinero ni oro, pero el trabajo que hacemos es, sin embargo, importante. Ayudamos a mantener la ciudad limpia y a reducir la contaminación.

Ayúdenos a impulsar más a Sure We Can, por un desarrollo social y ambiental más transparente. Con todo respeto, gracias por su fina atención.

{English}
Speaker Corey Johnson and the City Council, I extend my warmest regards. My name is Rene del Carmen. I have been working at Sure We Can for over 7 years as the redemption center representative. Before that I was a canner for in Manhattan for many years. I move on to the following as a human being. The life I lead in New York City has made me aware of the many needs of our New York community. Getting to know the streets, and different people - I remember almost a decade ago Sure We Can was born; the only non-profit redemption center in NYC. In addition to being a redemption center, we offer gardening and composting activities, and student projects that promote community development. We help over 900 people sell their recyclable materials, developing an economy for them so they can meet their living expenses- and of course, divert plastic from the sea and rivers to help the environment. Also, this way, we are saving the cost of a certain percentage of oil barrels.

I am a witness to the power of our leaders. I am here today so that all of you can hear me. I am not powerful nor am I wearing a tie, but I am a citizen like many of my teammates. We have seen thousands of tons of plastic, glass and aluminum all recycled. We look at the enormous strength

made by Sure We Can to help the environment, just as they support me and the community of Brooklyn. Many of us, like so many in life, have problems that no doctor has been able to cure, but recycling in the streets has turned into a kind of psychological therapy. One feels more useful to our society. We do not manufacture money or gold, pero el trabajo que hacemos es, sin embargo, importante. Ayudamos a mantener la ciudad limpia y a reducir la contaminación.

Please help us to push Sure We Can further, for a more transparent social and environmental development. With all my respect, thank you for your kind attention.

My name is Rhonda Keyser and I sit on the board of Sure We Can, NYC's only nonprofit redemption center. We're asking the Council today to stand up on behalf of our excluded waste management workers. Our unique organization has applied for capital funding to protect our site from gentrification and avoid eviction. If Sure We Can isn't able to continue its work, NYC will lose an integral partner in waste diversion and community outreach.

Sure We Can needs an Economic Development Exemption from the NYC Office of Management and Budget to the capital funding requirement of three consecutive years of $50,000+ in city contracts, because there are currently NO existing city contracts for community-based management of metal/glass/plastic waste in NYC.

The red tape in the Capital Funding process is currently locking Sure We Can out of receiving City funding. As an organization who -- in our 10 plus years of existence -- has clearly demonstrated proof of concept, we not only provide a fair and safe redemption center for people who redeem bottles and cans, but our low-income entrepreneurs also contribute robustly to a 70% return rate for these materials. If we aren't able to raise the capital to purchase our lot because of these bureaucratic technicalities, we will be forced to close our doors.

The board of Sure We Can -- made up of 50% canners -- is committed to self-determination as a key to empowering our most marginalized in our community. Please don't let this capital funding process undermine a grassroots organization like Sure We Can who are doing good on the ground every day, providing community and civic connection for our often-marginalized members.

Our members at Sure We Can are not donors to campaigns, but they are engaged VOTERS. They are low-income entrepreneurs who pay taxes, earn their own living and educate themselves about the issues that affect them. We thank the many advocates in our corner championing our cause who understand the value of self-determination and self-help: Senator Bernie Sanders', Senator Jeff Merkeley's, Rep Alan Lowenthal's and State Senator Todd Kaminsky's legislative teams have sought out our canners' perspectives around inclusive EPR. We sincerely thank your fellow Council Member Danny Dromm for his letter in support of our Capital Funding request, and we thank co-signers of this letter as well: CM Antonio Reynoso, CM Carlina Rivera, CM Jimmy Van Bramer, CM Kevin C. Riley, CM Diana Ayala, CM Helen Rosebnthal, CM Mark Levine. More are coming in each day.

Which side of the Sure We Can story will this City Council fall? Now is when we need help the most. And you are the ones who can do it.

Thank you,

Rhonda Keyser
Board Member, Sure We Can
Outreach Director, Cafeteria Culture
Board Member, New York State Children's Environmental Health Centers
Board Member, Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board

Oral Testimony
Pam Koch, Executive Director

Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy, Program in Nutrition,
Teachers College Columbia University

New York City Council Finance Committee Hearing
Public Testimony Section

May 25, 2021

School meals are crucial to the wellbeing of our children. Studies have shown that many children rely on school meals for a large portion of their meals and calories, often eating breakfast, lunch, and snack (Briefel et al., 2009; Cullen & Chen, 2017). Children from food insecure households compared with those from more food secure ones also rely more heavily on school meals (Forrestal et al., 2021). We also know that foods that students who get from schools are also not only healthier than what they get from other places (Forrestal et al., 2021), but also improve academic achievement and reduce food insecurity (Cohen et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021). Yet, we know that most Americans, including children, are not eating as healthy as they should or could (DGA, 2020).

Our research has shown that when cafeterias are redesigned to be more attractive, school meal participation can increase over 50%, while also increasing positive attitudes towards eating school meals (Koch et al., 2020). Crucially, we found that results were more positive when healthier items were more regularly featured and salad bars were in easily accessible locations, which is consistent with other studies (Cohen et al., 2015; Elsbernd et al., 2016).

Our findings suggested that funding to ensure training of staff, programming and nutrition education help to maintain the fidelity of the program. Being able to provide funding for continued cafeteria improvements drive health directly. Currently, out of the thousands of NYC school cafeterias, less than 25 have these type of improvements. NYC kids deserve more.

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the Network
Supportive Housing Network of NY

**Testimony to the New York City Council**
**Committee on Finance**
**Submitted by the Supportive Housing Network of New York**
**May 25, 2021**

The Network is a membership organization representing the nonprofit developers and operators of supportive housing, their staff and tenants therein. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the FY 2022 Executive Budget.

***Indirect Cost Rate***

I would like to begin by extending our community's sincere thanks to the Council for fighting for the restitution of funding for the Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) initiative. Full funding of this initiative will fulfill a promise made by the City to recognize the true cost that nonprofits incur in areas like accounting, human resources, and IT. Retroactive cuts wreaked havoc on our members' budgets and restoring those cuts is a step in the right direction toward nonprofits' fiscal sustainability.

***Cost of Living Adjustment***

At the same time, staff in supportive housing are still grappling with low wages. We appreciate that the Council included a 3% cost of living adjustment (COLA) for human service workers in their Budget Response and hope that you will continue to push for this vital addition to the Adopted Budget. As you stated, "anticipating regular wage increases to keep up with cost of living increases in the budget is customary for City workers." Why should City-contracted workers be treated with less regard?

Throughout this past year, supportive housing frontline staff provided services in the face of a global health crisis, all while being paid low wages under City contracts. The supportive housing community adapted rapidly, and was innovative in their service delivery and methods to keep tenants safe. Our providers maintained the highest levels of sanitation, distributed personal protective equipment, assisted with prescriptions, connected people to meals and mainstream benefits, and took on additional caseloads to assist their colleagues who were impacted by Covid-19, all the while also maintaining their normal service deliveries and grappling with the pandemic in their personal lives like everyone else.

Proposed legislation in the Civil Service & Labor Committee make clear how important fair wages for human service workers are for the Council. Yet many legislative efforts fail to account for the fact that nonprofits are beholden to City and State government contracts when setting wages for their workers. The stagnant contract rates translate to stagnant wages. Given the demographic of most direct care staff in supportive housing, majority women of color, this perpetuates a long history of systemic racism, gender

inequity and devaluing of nonprofits' societal contribution. Continued underfunding will come at a direct cost for communities most impacted by COVID-19: people of color and low wage workers.

***Capital Budget***

The Network is also grateful for the increase in the FY 22 HPD capital budget to $1.75 billion, $305 million over the FY 21 budget. Investing in affordable and supportive housing is more important now than ever to fight homelessness and housing insecurity and to stimulate the economy. Over the past year, single adult homelessness has hit a record high of over 20,000 people. While family homelessness has remained steady, the eventual lifting of the eviction moratorium could send us back in the wrong direction. New York City's homeless system is 74% Black, compared to 24% of the total population. Investing in affordable and supportive housing is one way to begin to disrupt systemic racism and racial inequities.

Although eventually restored, the capital budget cut last fiscal year sent a chill through the affordable and supportive housing development community. The ten month pause on HPD issuing soft commitment letters for new projects contributed to a slowdown in the pipeline and an environment of uncertainty. Continuing to invest in robust capital budgets is necessary as the industry and City overall recover from the economic impact of COVID.

The capital budget is critical for the creation of sufficient supportive housing to meet the need. Currently there are four eligible applicants for every vacant unit of supportive housing. Not all shelter residents have been screened for supportive housing eligibility, but of the 21,000 assessments done through the Coordinated Assessment and Placement System (CAPS), nearly 60% would be eligible. That's approximately 12,500 New Yorkers who would benefit from supportive housing.

The City is about a third of the way into the fifteen-year NYC 15/15 program to create 15,000 supportive housing apartments. To reach its goal, the City intended to construct 7,500 new congregate units and subsidize 7,500 scattered site units, where nonprofits rent apartments in the community. Unfortunately the scattered site model has been troubled for years, as rents have not kept pace with the market and many of the operational and service functions within the program are not fully funded. For this reason, the Network is advocating to restructure the NYC 15/15 program, and instead of an equal split, increase the number of new congregate units to 11,250, and decrease the number of scattered site units to 3,750. Bold investment in the City's capital budget is necessary to facilitate this shift, along with changes at the Federal level to the Low Income Housing Tax Credit and Housing Bond, for which we are advocating, and creative thinking about new financing models.

***HPD Staffing***

Of course, additional capital resources must be paired with staff resources to deploy them. We appreciate the Council's call to lift the hiring freeze for HPD.

We understand that the ratio to fill vacancies has recently been increased from 3:1 to 2:1. This is a big improvement, but we believe returning to a 1:1 ratio is the best way to ensure that resources are deployed effectively. Additionally, expedited hiring to fill existing vacancies is essential. Current vacancy rates range from 20% to 35% in departments that work on development. Without expedited hiring, these vacancies will linger even after the hiring ratio is adjusted.

Adequate staffing is essential not just to move capital and combat homelessness, as described above, but also to utilize Federal resources for recovery. New York City has recently been allocated approximately 8,000 Emergency Housing Vouchers through the American Rescue Plan. Coordination between rental assistance staff and the housing plan will be critical to effectively utilizing these vouchers. Underutilization could mean forfeiting this resource.

***Mental Health Crisis Response***

Members of our community may experience mental health crises and current police response can be violent and traumatizing. In order for supportive housing to continue to be a safe, affirming and healing space for our tenants and staff, we need an alternative to the status quo.

The City must ensure that individuals who experience a mental health crisis receive appropriate services which will de-escalate the crisis and ensure their wellbeing and the wellbeing of all other New Yorkers. Only those who are trained in de-escalation practices should respond to a mental health crisis, and the most appropriate individuals to respond are peers (those with lived mental health experience) and health care providers. Police are trained to uphold law and order and are not suited to deal with individuals experiencing mental health crises. In the last five years, the NYPD has killed 18 individuals who were experiencing mental health crises, 15 of whom were people of color.

The City Council must stop the killings and authorize the Mayor's allocation of $112 million for a non-police response to mental health crises. Lives are literally at stake.

We support the proposal of Correct Crisis Intervention Today – NYC (CCIT-NYC), which will make non-police responses available to those experiencing mental health crises. The proposal calls for:

- Teams of trained peers and emergency medical technicians;
- Teams run by culturally competent community organizations;
- Response times comparable to those of other emergencies;
- 24/7 operating hours;
- Calls routed to a number other than 911; and
- Oversight by an advisory board of 51% or more peers.

Please approve the Mayor's request for $112 million and please make sure the $112 million funds a non-police crisis response system of the sort proposed by CCIT-NYC.

Comment: City Council budget hearing

Greetings,

This communication is regarding today's City Council budget hearings. I'm reaching out about the vital need to use the abundance of funds that have been injected into the city's budget as a resource to ensure New York City public school children have access to smaller classes.

As you may know, classes in NYC are between 15-30% larger than the rest of the state. Such large class sizes prohibit our students from being able to properly learn. Teachers need to be able to allocate time as equally as possible to students. This is not possible with overcrowded classrooms. As a mom of a rising 4th grader and pre-k student, I know that a portion of their success depends on whether or not their teacher will be able to address their needs while in the classroom.

Additionally, with the continued uncertainty of COVID-19, students will still need to be at least three feet apart. This can not be accomplished with large class sizes. I urge the City Council to seriously consider allocating additional funds in the budget in order to decrease class sizes throughout the NYC public school system.

Best,
--
Tiffany Winbush
29 Cliff Street, 18B
New York, NY 10038

--
Elect Tiffany Winbush, June 22, 2021
NYC Council, District 1
http://www.tiffanyfornyc.com
Connect with our campaign on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.
Donate to Tiffany Winbush for NYC Council here.
NYC's $8-to-$1 campaign matching funds program means your donation multiplies!
***Leading with Empathy***
***Endorsed by Progressive Women of NY***

**Testimony on behalf of Turning Point for Women and Families for the**

**New York City Council Committee on Finance Hearing**

**May 25, 2021**

Good Afternoon. My name is Tazmin Uddin and I am the Youth Program Director at Turning Point for Women and Families. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Turning Point for Women and Families (Turning Point) was founded in 2004 and is the first nonprofit to address domestic violence in New York City's Muslim community. Turning Point helps Muslim women and girls affected by domestic violence empower themselves and transform their lives through a wide range of culturally-competent services focused on safety and self-sufficiency. To date, we have worked directly with over 3,000 women, adolescent girls, and children.

Turning Point conducts ARISE NY! Workshops for youth to help them address bullying and hate crimes, and provides them with tools to become upstanders who can safely intervene and report incidents of hate and discrimination. Since the start of the pandemic, there have been over 3,800 incidents of anti-Asian violence and an 1,900% increase in Anti-Asian related hate crimes across NYC. Now more than ever, our communities are vulnerable and need additional support.

Many organizations have had to pivot resources to meet the needs of the community. To address the double pandemic of the coronavirus and domestic violence, Turning Point started a COVID-Relief fund, which allowed us to provide financial assistance to 22 DV survivors and 28 children to support their utilities, rent, and groceries. After an entire year, we had to discontinue this financial assistance due to limited funds. Food and housing insecurity escalated during this time. Vulnerable members of our community are homeless and starving, and fear seeking support due to the stigma, shame, and uncertainty of benefits. This is unacceptable. At no time have domestic violence survivors needed us more, we need to be there for them and ensure that the options available to them are both culturally and religiously sensitive. Throughout the pandemic, since March 2020, Turning Point has continued to provide critical services to our clients and our community. We do everything we can to ensure that our clients are not isolated and continue to receive counseling and support. We enable our senior women to overcome the digital divide and prepare for their citizenship exams, and make sure that our youth continue to have a safe space to gather, share concerns, and express themselves.

We urge each of you in the Finance Committee to support the 15% and Growing Coalition's Recovery and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers Initiative. During this time of uncertainty, trauma, and discrimination, APA communities in NYC face greater barriers. We are counting on you to provide sustained support to community based organizations such as Turning Point, who offer critical and life-affirming services.

Thank you.

**Public Testimony to the New York City Council**
**Executive Budget Hearing for Fiscal Year 2022**

May 25, 2021

To: Speaker Corey Johnson; Finance Committee Chairperson Danny Dromm, and members of New York CIty Council

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

TakeRoot Justice provides legal, participatory research and policy support to strengthen the work of grassroots and community based groups in New York City to dismantle racial, economic and social oppression. Our organization adheres to a theory of change where short-term and individual successes help build the capacity and power of our community partners, who in turn can have longer-term impact on policies, laws and systems that affect their communities. We collaborate with 70+ groups organizing low-income, POC and immigrant communities throughout NYC to serve 2100+ New Yorkers per year and share $20 million+ in support for the fight for tenants' and immigrants' rights as lead subcontractors on City contracts. TakeRoot Justice has approximately 50 staff, operates on a budget of approximately $7 million and our team reflects the city we live and work in. A majority of our staff and leadership are people of color.

We are submitting testimony **to respectfully advocate for the restoration and increase of funding** for the NYC Council discretionary programs. We receive funding from several initiatives which are critical to our work delivering legal services to low-income New Yorkers and grassroots community groups and their members. After last year's decreases and an incredibly difficult year for low-income and working class New Yorkers, expanding these programs are more important than ever. These vital programs are:

- **StabilizingNYC Initiative**
- **Community Preservation Initiative**
- **Community Land Trust Initiative**
- **Legal Services for the Working Poor**
- **WCBDI- Worker Coop Business Development Initiative**

In addition, we urge the continued funding to two important programs currently in the Mayor's budget that the Council has advocated for and championed in past years:

- **Commerical Lease Assistance Program-** this has been restored to the FY22 budget thanks to council efforts
- **Low-wage Workers Initiative-** one pager attached.
-

The Low-Wage Worker Initiative funds free employment-related civil legal services to low-wage, immigrant workers. It also funds a Low Wage Worker Support Program that supports the efforts of community-based organizations to provide comprehensive outreach and education for low-wage workers to connect them to lawyers providing free assistance. In FY20, Low-Wage Worker Initiative funding, which is administered under the IOI Baseline Program, supported CILEC's work in obtaining over $1, 383,200.00 in settlements and judgments for low wage and immigrant workers and providing legal assistance on over 780 employment-related civil legal matters for over 600 low wage and immigrant workers citywide.

**COVID Response**

When the pandemic hit, as an organization we had to make quick shifts. We did wellness calls to all our partners and clients, opened a second legal rights warm-line answering questions on:

- Evictions and inability to pay rent;
- Public benefits and unemployment benefits;
- COVID-19 related issues about court and agency closures and changes to the law;
- Housing court cases;
- Consumer debt issues.
- Small business and commercial loans

In addition we have and continue to adapt our Participatory Action Research projects with new salience in the COVID-19 era; Help mutual aid networks as they tackle questions around taxes, governance and other logistics; help essential workers with access to justice for safety standards and sick leave.

As the pandemic continues, these services are more critical than ever. Tenants must remain safely in their home and the City is facing a massive eviction crisis in FY22. Affordable housing continues to be under attack by landlords who are pushing tenants out by illegal construction, unsafe building conditions and harassment. TakeRoot is helping groups of tenants fight back against these tactics through tenants' rights education, legal assistance and legal advice and representation for tenants facing illegal rent increases, eviction, and a lack of repairs. We work with community groups across the city, providing tenant clinics and legal support for their organizing work. We have been able to provide these services virtually and have educated ourselves on the ever-changing laws and policies of the pandemic.

In addition to their vulnerability as tenants, working poor New Yorkers who often barely make ends meet can face catastrophic consequences as a result of a civil legal problem. Consequences such as not being paid for their work or not being paid overtime; identity theft; the freezing of a bank account as a result of a collection lawsuit they did not even know about; or being denied public benefits to which they are entitled. The consequence of these problems can lead to other problems, including increased risk of eviction or foreclosure. These working New Yorkers can end up spiraling downward to join the ranks of the poor if they do not have access to lawyers to assist them. Our legal services organizations represent these New Yorkers in all five boroughs in housing, consumer, foreclosure, immigration, benefits, and employment matters in state, appellate, and federal courts, and various administrative agencies.

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis working poor New Yorkers have and will continue to disproportionately face legal problems in unprecedented numbers. Even before the COVID-19 crisis, tens of thousands of New Yorkers were hanging on by a thread to their homes, their families, their well-being, and their dignity. As the crisis has laid bare, neighborhoods of color and immigrant communities across the City have been especially hit hard by health and economic disparities. The crisis has resulted in unprecedented problems related to unemployment insurance, as well as workplace safety concerns, issues with CARES Act stimulus payments, price gouging, and scams, and has caused many New Yorkers to incur unexpected debt, which will mean an increase in debt collection litigation, and for some, bankruptcy. Those working poor who are adversely affected will need members of our Coalition to advise them, help them navigate various complex legal processes, and fight their legal battles by representing them in the cases against them, and by advocating for them in the multiple systems that impact them. But for our legal services, the working poor community would be detrimentally impacted, and the cascading effect of not being able to support working poor families at this time will quickly lead to greater homelessness, poorer health outcomes, job loss and overall instability.

All of the work described above is done hand in hand with our coalition partners with whom we share critical City Council Initiative funding listed above. These funding sources allows our organization to maintain meaningful partnerships to **protect and repair affordable housing; organize and empower tenants and communities; protect and empower immigrant workers; build sustainable community economies and help low-income and BIPOC New Yorkers and communities get back on their feet get back on.**

Together with you, our organizations and vast networks can lead this fight against the threat of rising homeless and displacement that NYC now faces on an unprecedented scale. Now more than ever, **we must continue to advocate together to ensure NYC families can remain in their homes, communities, and be safe.**

COMMUNITY THROUGH COOPERATION

To Chair Dromm, and the members of the Committee on Finance,

My name is Jacqueline Baum. I am a student at the City College of New York, and I am here to represent UHAB, the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board.

UHAB was founded with the mission to empower low-income communities that have historically faced abandonment and disinvestment, by providing tools to rehabilitate and maintain their own affordable housing co-ops. These same communities have been hit the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that of the 1,300 HDFC co-ops across NYC, 40% of them reported a loss of income during the COVID-19 pandemic, 99% could not access SBA or SBS loans, and 250 of them are financially distressed.

HDFC residents and other low-income New Yorkers need the City to invest in ambitious green infrastructure projects to recover in the wake of COVID-19 and address the disproportionate environmental hazards in their neighborhoods. It is imperative that the City invest in green infrastructure projects that specifically serve Black and brown frontline communities, create good union jobs, and move us towards our climate goals.

UHAB is a member of the Climate Works for All coalition. The coalition is pleased to see funding for organics, commercial waste zones, and electric school buses in the executive budget and we hope to see these items funded in the adopted budget. However, it is urgent that the council and mayor also commit to funding retrofits and installing solar specifically in our public schools.

We are asking for $80 million annually until 2035 in retrofitting public schools and $100 million annually until 2025 in solar. This is a total of 1.5 billion that can be allocated from the DCAS public building energy efficiency funds. The City needs to makes this commitment, and as a result improve the environmental health of our schools, make our children safer, create thousands of good union jobs, move us towards climate goals, and invest in New York City's low-income and Black and brown communities.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Baum (she/her)
UHAB, Energy Services Intern

David Avina (he/his)
UHAB, Assistant Director

**TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK**

**New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing FY 2022**
**Honorable Daniel Dromm, Chair**

**Submitted by:**
**UJA-Federation of New York**

**May 25, 2021**

**TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK**
**Committee on Finance, Executive Budget Hearing FY 2022**
**May 25, 2021**

Thank you, Chairperson Dromm and members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to provide testimony on the New York City FY 2022 budget.

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

Over the last year, the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically and disproportionately impacted the lives of those living in poverty, further lifting-up the effects of systemic inequality and the real challenges New York City faces. In response to these needs, UJA's network of human services partners has been on the front lines since the pandemic hit, assisting New Yorkers of all backgrounds, throughout the five boroughs. UJA's network provides a wide range of services, including early childhood education and childcare, mental health supports, case management services, services for survivors of domestic violence, access to food, and a wide range of senior services.

**UJA thanks the City Council and the Administration for retracting the FY21 retroactive cut to the Indirect Cost Rate and agreeing to fully fund and baseline the ICR in the FY22 budget. UJA requests that the City Council and the Administration strengthen their commitment to fully funding the ICR in FY22 by ensuring that it is funded beyond stimulus and implemented appropriately.**

UJA also submits the following 12 recommendations and requests for the New York City FY 2022 budget:

1. **<u>Elie Wiesel Holocaust Survivor Initiative</u>**

UJA urges the Council to maintain its $4 million investment in the Elie Wiesel Holocaust Survivors Initiative in FY22. In the wake of COVID-19, New York City's estimated 36,000 Holocaust survivors are among the most vulnerable to its impact.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, social workers funded through the Survivor Initiative continue to provide the specialized care that survivors require due to the trauma they experienced during the Holocaust. There are many unique struggles survivors face today: the isolation, the return of memories of hiding, rationing food, being away from family, as well as sickness and death. They are also among the most vulnerable and susceptible to COVID-19. Because of this funding, survivors are not alone.

**Restoring and baselining $4 Million will support:**

- **Case Management to access benefits and support.** Case Managers are specially trained in the psychological impact of the Holocaust.
- **Mental Health Services** including home visits to help survivors work through the traumas that now manifest in sleep disturbance, anxiety, depression and inability to trust
- **Trauma Informed Care** provided by professionals who recognize and avoid possible triggers, thereby reducing the potential for re-traumatization
- **Crisis Prevention** to help stave off eviction and hunger
- **Legal Services and entitlement counseling**
- **Emergency Financial Assistance** for food, housing, prescriptions, medical and dental care
- **Socialization Programs** to reduce isolation
- **Training & Support** for Caregivers and home health aides working with survivors
- **End of Life Care** including hospice and ethical wills

New York City must continue its commitment to Holocaust survivors. It is crucial to provide specialized care and support programs for survivors to enhance their quality of life and allow them to live out their remaining years with dignity. **UJA asks that $4 million be restored and baselined to support Holocaust survivors living in poverty.**

2. **Supporting Older Adults Throughout COVID-19 and Beyond**

Providers of services for older adults have played a critical role throughout New York City's ongoing COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. Whether small community-based organizations or large nonprofits serving clients throughout all five boroughs, each has provided essential services to vulnerable older adults forced to remain in their homes throughout the pandemic crisis.

**UJA is appreciative of the investments included in the Executive Budget to both better support older New Yorkers through programs such as Senior Centers, as well as to support the human services sector at large.** More specifically, UJA is deeply appreciative of the decision to implement the $10 million of outstanding model Senior Center budget funding promises; and include $39.4 million towards Senior Centers and NORCs. These investments are an important step towards bolstering a system that has been critical to supporting older New Yorkers through the historically difficult fight against COVID-19.

**In addition to the full restoration of all Council Aging Initiatives to FY20 levels, UJA would like to highlight the following recommendations and requests for the New York City FY 2022 budget:**

**Suspend the Older Adult Centers and Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities Supportive Service Programs (NORC) Request for Proposals (RFP) until the following issues are addressed:**

New York City is entering a critical phase of the recovery and the senior services network must remain focused on vaccine outreach and engaging older adults to return to in-person activities and break out of a year of sustained social isolation. With the May 3rd announcement about reinstating grab-and-go meals at senior centers, UJA wants to enable centers to focus on maximizing access and safety with this return to some in-person programming. The ultimate mission is to support the older adults who rely on services and ensure that they have the resources they need to live safe, healthy lives in the homes and neighborhoods. UJA agrees that the senior services network needs changes to better serve older adults in New York City, and there are promising concepts in this RFP that will start on that path to innovation. However, these changes must be made responsibly, and providers need the time and capacity to prepare adequate responses. Furthermore, several structural changes must be made to the procurement in order for it to be viable. These issues must be addressed to continue serving those who most rely on these services. UJA urges DFTA to suspend the Older Adult Centers and NORC RFP until the following changes are made:

1) ***Provide a model budget for both Older Adult Centers, Network OACs, and NORCs, and ensure that City funding for any new procurement is baselined and supported with City tax levy funding.*** Currently, the OAC/NORC RFP does not include a model budget for either program module, and for OACs, it does not even include a maximum budget size. We question how this can be a fair procurement, because any bidder could respond and overpromise deliverables, making their application seem more attractive than other bidders who might submit budgets that are closer to their current funding levels. Additionally, not providing a sample budget, maximum budget size, or even budget tiers could perpetuate the well-documented funding disparities among centers. Since so much time has been devoted to a model budget, DFTA should share its thinking. Finally, according to the FY22 Executive Budget Proposal, the new investments into DFTA's

budget to support this RFP are comprised of federal stimulus funding, which could create a fiscal cliff for senior services once that stimulus funding is spent.

2) ***Provide greater clarity on the NORC portion of the RFP and decouple from the Older Adult Centers procurement.*** Unlike senior centers, the NORC program was never granted a Concept Paper before issuing this RFP, giving potential applicants limited opportunity to express feedback to program design or consider whether they want to apply. The RFP also implies that NORC Supportive Services Programs are a congregate program, when in reality, NORCs are a community organizing tool to bring the right resources to a geographic area. Older Adult Centers and NORCs are related, but fundamentally different, service models and should not be grouped together in a single procurement.
3) ***Include COLAs, cost escalators, correct indirect funding levels, and a mechanism to ensure that providers can receive more funds should they serve more people.*** Currently, the RFP does not address some of the most basic structural needs of senior services providers, including cost escalators and automatic Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) for staff for a three-year contract with an option to renew for three years. It is impossible to assume that providers would not need additional funding over the life of their contract. It is also problematic that the RFP instructs bidders to enter a 10% indirect rate since funding for the Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) Initiative was reinstated on April 23, 2021, and most providers have a CPA-certified rate or a federally approved indirect rate that is greater than 10%. Finally, the RFP places a greater emphasis on marketing and outreach. Since no senior center can turn a participant away, there must be a way for a provider to receive additional funds should their outreach efforts yield greater participation.
4) ***Release the community assessments and information gathered to inform the RFP.*** The RFP makes several references to focus groups, market rate research, and community needs assessments conducted by the Department for the Aging in preparation for this RFP. This information must be released in order to give bidders and the public a full sense of what informed the RFP, and to what extent that research was conducted in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that senior centers and NORCs have been closed to in-person programming for over a year, we anticipate significant changes to demand for in-person services, in ways that we cannot fully understand at this point. It is crucial to know to what extent COVID-19 influenced this RFP so that the network can remain flexible and nimble going forward to respond to the next phase of reopening.

**Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs)**

Classic and Neighborhood NORCS are multi-age housing developments or neighborhoods, respectively, that were not originally developed for older adults, but are now home to a significant number of older people. Throughout the COVID-19 health crisis, NORCs have provided vital response services to thousands of older New Yorkers, making continued investment in this program critical. NORC staff provide wellness checks to address mental health and social isolation; assist seniors in accessing food and other supplies, coordinate services in residential buildings not developed specifically for seniors, and now, help older adults navigate New York City's complicated vaccine process. These activities were crucial prior to COVID-19 and have become even more important since.

Without the support of the City Council many NORC programs would not be able to continue to provide critical services to so many older adults in New York City. In order to sustain and strengthen the NORC program, three key supports are needed in the FY22 City Budget:

**i. Restore $5.4 million to the NORC City Council Initiative, including $1.3 million to support health and nursing services.**

The FY21 final budget included $5.4 million in City Council NORC Initiative funding to support dozens of NORCs and Neighborhood NORCs. This included $1.3 million to fill a

funding gap for health and nursing services in NORCs. The Council must restore these funds to ensure these programs can continue to provide services to NORC residents.

**ii. Baseline $1 million for NORC Programs**

The FY20 and FY21 budgets included $1 million from the Administration to support certain NORC programs previously funded by the Council; however, these funds were never baselined. If this funding is not restored, the future of these NORC programs is uncertain.

**iii. Achieve Salary Parity for DFTA-Funded NORCs: $1.7 million**

While successfully providing healthcare, social services, and socialization opportunities to thousands of New Yorkers – and helping to defray Medicaid costs – NORC staff has been struggling with chronically low salaries, as contracts do not include cost escalators and have not allowed for meaningful raises in many years. The NORC network has seen high turnover rates for all positions, including directors and case managers. This is particularly challenging given recent increases to senior center staff salaries through the Department for the Aging (DFTA)'s FY 2018 "model budget" process. The disparity created through this exercise has yielded a scenario where senior center and NORC staff have similar responsibilities, workload, and client demands, but one staff makes significantly more than the other. On average, systemwide, senior center staff make roughly $15,000 more than NORC staff.

## 3. Addressing Food Insecurity

Food access is a growing concern among New Yorkers. Stay-at-home orders and social distancing measures have cut off reliable pathways to food access, such as meals provided in community settings (houses of worship, senior centers) and schools. As a result of the pandemic and the ensuing economic downturn, one in four New York City residents are now food insecure. That represents about 2 million New Yorkers. As rates of food insecurity increase and New Yorkers are relying more on food pantries, these pantries are unable to fully respond to the need. According to a survey conducted by Hunger Free America, almost 37 percent of food pantry and soup kitchen respondents in the City reported having to turn people away, reduce the amount of food distributed per person or limit their hours of operation because they lacked resources. Additionally, 65 percent of respondents reported an increase in people served since the start of the pandemic.

Although UJA's nonprofit partners quickly shifted their operations to better support New York's emergency food efforts by expanding their food pantry operations; helping clients gain access to SNAP and other benefits and raising private dollars to deliver meals to homebound older adults, there is still tremendous unmet need.

UJA-Federation thanks the Administration for including an additional $32 million for emergency food in the Executive Budget, including $27.7 million for the P-FRED program, as well as $3.6 million for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP).

UJA-Federation submits the following recommendations to ensure that the local food system and supply chain remains intact, that all families are able to access the food and support they need, and that front line community-based organizations (CBOs) can respond effectively to this crisis:

i. **Invest an additional $25 million in Emergency Food Relief**

   a. Last spring, the City distributed $25 million to emergency food providers to help address the hunger crisis exacerbated by COVID. As the City recovers from this

pandemic, UJA urges the City to reinvest this money to meet current food needs. In addition to reinvesting this funding, UJA urges the Council and the Administration to consider how to expand the eligible entities for receipt of this funding and ensure that data on the outcomes from the program is collected and reported.

ii. **Allow additional flexibilities in terms of program operation of EFAP**

a. UJA supports the NYC Council's call to increase baselined funding for EFAP by $10 million, as well as the proposal to invest an additional $20 million to support smaller community-based emergency food providers that are not a part of the EFAP network. In addition, UJA urges the Administration and the Council to allow EFAP providers to use EFAP funding for administrative, rental and operational costs that have increased or emerged since the start of the pandemic. In addition, UJA encourages the Administration and the Council to explore ways in which the program can be adjusted to allow more opportunity for individual pantries to make purchasing decisions as is the case with the New York State Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance Program and New York City's Pandemic-Food Reserve Emergency Distribution Program as well as to explore ways to incorporate incentives for the purchase of fresh food.

iii. **Allocate additional funds within the Human Resource Administration towards nutrition benefit program enrollment and outreach.**

a. Food insecurity has nearly doubled in NYC since the start of the pandemic, yet only 50 percent of New Yorkers facing severe food hardship are enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). To meet this need, UJA urges HRA to allocate additional funds within the budget towards promoting and enrolling New Yorkers in social safety net programs, re-opening field offices closed during the pandemic, adding additional One Stop Shop locations, adding additional staff to the hotline to enroll people in programs and investing additional funding into promoting the Health Bucks and Get the Good Stuff Program at DOHMH.

iv. **Ensure more transparency in the GetFood NYC program**

a. The City Council's budget response calls for a new infusion of $80M for the Get Food NYC program in FY22. Yet, little to no information has been made available to advocates or City Council on the details and impacts of the Get Food program to date. Although UJA is supportive of additional funding for this program, UJA underscores the need for an oversight hearing with City Council's General Welfare staff in June 2021 as well as a reporting bill on the on the Administration's COVID-19 Emergency Food Programs to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the GetFood program before it is made a permanent fixture of NYC's emergency food response efforts.

v. **UJA urges the Administration and the Council to work together to ensure that access to Kosher and Halal meals continues, both in public and private schools.**

a. UJA appreciates the City's commitment to ensuring that children have access to meals even when they are not physically attending school through the Grab&Go model, including access to Kosher and Halal meals. However, UJA agencies have reported experiencing issues with the Grab&Go program Kosher meals, including with the meal quality – many report a lack of variety and unappealing cold meals; food being inappropriate to meet the nutritional needs of the children and youth; and

an insufficient number of meals available for participants in their programs. UJA agencies have reported having to throw out food received through the Grab&Go program due to spoilage, poor quality or dietary standards not being met resulting in a significant waste of food and city funding. **UJA urges the DOE to resolve these issues with Kosher and Halal food so that as buildings reopen and more kids begin to attend school in person, those students that require these meals can be appropriately served.**

### 4. $16.6 Million for Home Delivered Meals Program (HDM)

The Home Delivered Meals Program has played a critical role in New York City's COVID-19 response efforts. As older adults continue to remain at home, many do not have family or friends that are able to help them acquire food. While New York City launched GetFood to help address this issue, demand for the HDM program also increased. Currently, an estimated 18,000 homebound older adults receive home delivered meals across New York City; however, enrollment in the HDM program at the peak of the pandemic was 21,000. Even then, more seniors qualified and should have been enrolled in HDM instead of being directed to GetFood NYC.

Beyond simple meal provision, the HDM Program provides important supports for homebound older adults. Recipients of home delivered meals are chronically disabled due to heart disease, mobility challenges, diabetes, arthritis or severe vision impairment and are reliant on these supports, that now, in a pandemic, serve as a critical lifeline for these older New Yorkers. Regular meal deliveries provide health and psychological benefits beyond nutrition and can act as an access point for other critical support services, which help older adults continue to live healthfully and safely in their homes.

However, the New York City per meal reimbursement rate is only $9.58, which includes food, transportation costs and staff. This is far below the national per meal rate for urban areas of $11.78. This low rate does not reflect the actual cost of meal provision and delivery, nor does it account for the high cost of culturally competent meals, such as kosher or halal. A survey by LiveOn-NY of New York City showed that nonprofit HDM providers showed that many organizations lose thousands of dollars every year providing home-delivered meals.

**UJA requests the following investments to support the Home Delivered Meals Program:**

- **$13.6 Million for FY22 increased demand and adequate per meal reimbursement rates**
- **$3 Million for FY22 weekend and holiday meals provided by City Meals on Wheels**

### 5. Summer Rising

Students and their families have endured an extremely 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 children and youth struggled to benefit from remote learning and often relied on their parents or guardians to provide them additional academic support. The Summer Rising initiative has been created to address "unfinished learning" from the 2020-2021 schoolyear while actively attempting to reconnect students to each other and their schools this summer. While UJA supports free academic and enrichment summer programs for New York City

students, there are some aspects of the Summer Rising program and how it will be implemented that UJA finds to be concerning.

i. The Summer Rising program will be composed of Department of Education (DOE) instruction in the morning with COMPASS or SONYC school-based Community Based Organization (CBO) providers overseeing enrichment activities in the afternoon. COMPASS school-based summer programs were not cut in the Preliminary or Executive budgets. However, summer SONYC programs were completely cut in the Preliminary budget. $5.7 million for 9,500 summer SONYC program slots was restored in the FY22 Executive budget. The Administration is projecting that 190,000 students will attend the Summer Rising program. **If this number of students is going to be reached, more SONYC summer funding must be restored immediately for CBOs to have enough time to plan accordingly. Slots must be funded at $1700 for elementary programs and $925 for middle school programs.**

ii. Availability of paraprofessionals is vital for students with disabilities who will require them to attend the Summer Rising program. When the Learning Bridges/Labs initiative was introduced and eventually implemented, students with disabilities were one of the populations that the program targeted initially. Unfortunately, CBOs struggled to support students with disabilities in Learning Bridges/Labs and were often unable to connect paraprofessionals with students who needed them. The DOE and Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) have stated that paraprofessionals will be available for students with disabilities who will require them to attend the Summer Rising program (both the DOE and CBO overseen sections of the day). **It is unclear how the DOE and DYCD are planning on hiring and maintaining enough paraprofessionals for the Summer Rising program. CBOs in particular need to know in advance how to access paraprofessionals and be able to connect them to the children and youth with disabilities in their programs as soon as possible.**

iii. CBOs who oversee COMPASS and/or SONYC school-based summer programs and will now be managing Summer Rising programs, will operate under Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) summer camp licenses or School-Age Child Care (SACC) licenses (overseen in New York City by the DOHMH). SACC licenses specifically list which rooms providers can operate programs in as well as what staff can work in each location. Meaning, if a program is found by DOHMH to be operating in another location or have staff working in that location not listed on their SACC license the program can be cited by DOHMH. CBOs operating under SACC licenses are concerned with how they will be able to adhere to these rules within the Summer Rising framework. Specifically, CBO providers overseeing the program for children in kindergarten through fifth grade will be required to be in the classroom with DOE staff in the morning during the DOE instruction portion of the day. CBOs are concerned they could potentially be cited by DOHMH for having DOE staff in the rooms they will be overseeing programs in. Because of the volume of children and youth anticipated to participate in Summer Rising, CBOs are also concerned that they may be moved to different rooms in schools they are usually assigned to and are listed on their SACC licenses. This could again make CBOs susceptible to citations from DOHMH. As of the writing of this testimony, DYCD, DOE or DOHMH have not been able to provide specific guidance to CBO providers on how to overcome these barriers. **Summer Rising CBO providers require timely feedback from the DOE, DYCD and DOHMH on**

**how they can operate within this new framework under their current SACC licenses.**

iv. Hiring new staff and completing their comprehensive background checks in time to work in the Summer Rising program will continue to be a challenge for CBOs if the system remains in its current state. 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 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 between two months and one year 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. Providers will be unable to staff the Summer Rising program if the background check process remains in its current state. **UJA urges the 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.

UJA recognizes the need for children and youth in New York City to have access to high quality academic and enrichment programs like Summer Rising this summer. The previously listed concerns must be addressed in order for this program to be a success.

**6. <u>Increase Supports for Students in Foster Care and Youth Transitioning out of Foster Care</u>**

As children and youth return to in-person learning, the DOE must ensure that these students have access to transportation. Federal and state law requires the City to provide transportation to students placed in foster care so they can stay in their original school, unless it is in their best interest to transfer schools.

The New York City FY 20 adopted budget included language that stated, "the Administration has agreed to use existing resources to ensure busing for students in foster care". Since then, the DOE has not kept this promise by not guaranteeing busing or another mode of transportation to students in foster care. Last year when schools were providing in-person instruction, the DOE continued to offer some students MetroCards, even when MTA services were insufficient to get the students to school. The DOE must honor its commitment and ensure that students in foster care are included in its door-to-door transportation plans going forward. **UJA urges the Administration to ensure that the adopted budget include $5 million for the DOE to provide bus service or other door-to-door transportation to students in foster care who need it to maintain school stability.**

During this pandemic, students in foster care have faced significant barriers to meaningful participation in remote learning. These experiences have highlighted the need to have staff at the DOE with expertise on students in foster care. There are specific laws and protections that apply to students in foster care, and the

DOE needs staff members who have expertise in these areas and are tasked with developing and implementing policies to improve outcomes for these students. Personnel are also needed to answer questions that arise related to students in foster care, such as who signs consent for special education evaluations, who attends parent/teacher conferences, and whether the school can release records to the student's parent or foster parent.

Currently, there is not a single staff member at the DOE focused full time on students in foster care. **UJA urges the administration to include $1.5 million in its adopted budget for a small DOE office for students in foster care with a senior-level leader and borough-based liaisons to help address the needs of this population more adequately.**

UJA with the Fair Futures coalition recognizes that older youth transitioning out of the foster care system require additional supports to ensure academic and/or vocational success as they age into adulthood. The COVID-19 crisis has left youth in foster care feeling isolated, confused and scared. While so many other New Yorkers can lean on their families to get them through this challenging time, these youth require additional supports to assist them during and after the pandemic. Additional supports can include providing foster youth with access to a long-term coach from the start of high school through age 26, as well as providing social-emotional supports for foster youth in middle school. This is a proven strategy for increasing graduation rates and post-secondary enrollment, preventing system involvement, and helping youth get on a pathway to becoming self-sufficient, successful adults. UJA is grateful that the Executive Budget included $2.7 million to support youth transitioning out of foster care. **UJA supports the Fair Futures FY22 budget request to include an additional $17.3 million ($20 million total) in baseline funding in the adopted budget for long-term, comprehensive supports for all foster youth from middle school through age 26.**

### 7. UPK and 3-K programs

The Executive Budget included $377 million to expand access to 3-K increasing this investment to $753 million in FY24 with the goal of providing universal access to 3-K to every 3-year-old in the city by September 2023. This expansion will be paid for by using time limited federal stimulus funds. **While UJA supports free, high quality programs for 3-year-olds, we are concerned with how this expansion will continue to be funded when federal stimulus money is no longer available to support it.** Lack of sustainable funding could also adversely impact CBOs who will be hosting many of the City's expanded 3-K programs. UJA encourages the Administration to pursue funding sources beyond federal stimulus relief funds to support the expansion of 3-K in New York City.

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

The Basic Educational Data System (BEDs) date was December 1st. The number of children enrolled in UPK programs on December 1st determined how much community-based programs will be paid for the year. Due to the pandemic, many UPK programs have seen a drop in their enrollment numbers. On the BEDs date, one of UJA's nonprofit partners had 40 out of 54 slots enrolled in their UPK program. If

reimbursement remains based on enrollment this program will lose over $100,000-a deficit they will not be able to absorb. While enrollment may decrease, costs for running programs have remained the same or increased due to the need to maintain staff while implementing additional safety measures. **UJA urges the DOE to keep UPK contracts whole and to not use enrollment on the BEDs date to determine how much programs will be compensated.**

### 8. Preschool Special Education Programs

Young children with disabilities who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are entitled to receive the services and supports included in their IEP. Preschool special education programs provide these mandated services and supports. The FY22 Executive Budget includes an investment of $22 million (which will be increased to $88 million in FY 23) to strengthen preschool special education programs. **Unfortunately, no funding in FY22 has been promised to address the preschool special education class shortage or provide salary parity to teachers in preschool special education programs. In fact, no commitment has been made to providing salary parity for teachers in these programs in FY 23 either.**

**NYC does not have enough seats available in preschool special education programs to serve children in need of these specialized classes.** In March 2020 at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City was already projecting a shortage of 1,000 to 1,900 seats in preschool special education programs. As the pandemic continued, there was a decline in special education referrals to preschool special education programs in some neighborhoods, negatively impacting these programs financially. While enrollment was down in some programs, there were not enough spots for children with the most significant disabilities in special needs preschools who specialize in serving this population. Children with special needs were struggling to gain access to preschool special education programs before the pandemic. These programs will be in even higher demand post-pandemic due to children with disabilities having limited access to the services and supports they needed during the pandemic.

**The City's shortage of preschool special education program seats is at risk of worsening because teachers who lead these classes at CBOs often earn salaries that are far lower than other teachers, making it difficult for CBOs to recruit and retain teachers for these classes.** In 2019, the City made strides toward salary parity for CBO early childhood educators, setting a schedule for salary increases so that their starting pay would be on par with DOE public school teachers. However, those salary increases apply only to educators in CBO preschool general education classes, excluding teachers working in CBO preschool special education classes. As a result, CBO preschool special class educators are now some of the lowest paid teachers in the City, despite serving some of the City's highest-need students. Without ensuring salary parity for this group of teachers, the City runs the risk that these teachers will leave CBO preschool special education programs in pursuit of higher salaries at public schools and CBO EarlyLearn/3-K/Pre-K classes—thereby exacerbating the troubling shortage of preschool special education class seats. **UJA urges the Administration to invest $85 million in the FY 22 budget to ensure every child who requires a preschool special education program has access to one and extend salary parity to teachers of CBO preschool special education programs so they may continue to support preschoolers with disabilities.**

### 9. Increasing and Maintaining Investments in Mental Health Initiatives

UJA's nonprofit partners receive funding through a number of mental health initiatives including Autism Awareness, Geriatric Mental Health, Court Involved Youth Mental Health, Opioid Prevention and Treatment, and Developmental, Psychological and Behavioral Health. UJA submits the following recommendations that will allow UJA's nonprofit partners to continue to serve these populations through FY 22:

#### i. Maintain funding at $3.2 million for the Autism Awareness Initiative

Seven of UJA's nonprofit partners receive funding through the Autism Awareness Initiative. The Autism Awareness Initiative funding allows our nonprofit partners to provide wraparound services to autistic children and youth in afterschool, weekend and summer programs. It also supports trainings for parents, guardians and caregivers of children diagnosed with autism. Most importantly, these supports and trainings are offered to individuals with autism and their families who are not eligible for services through the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities. In many cases, this is one of the few supports these individuals and their families can access in the community.

During the pandemic, providers transitioned services to virtual platforms. Those who provided trainings and support groups to parents, guardians and caregivers of children with autism saw an increased need for these groups. Due to the need to quarantine and social distance, many parents, guardians and caregivers of children with autism became totally responsible for the 24/7 care of the individuals with autism who live with them. This included providing one on one supports to their children with autism as they participated in virtual learning while they attempted to maintain their own demanding work schedules. Because of this, support groups for parents, guardians and caregivers of children with autism became very popular allowing for these individuals to virtually meet with others who were experiencing similar situations as well as learn new skills on how to support the individuals they were caring for.

The wraparound afterschool and summer programs provided by our nonprofit partners generally focus on assisting participants to develop intellectually and socially. During the past year, the afterschool programs funded by the Autism Awareness Initiative transitioned to a combination of virtual and in-person offerings while summer programs were in-person with reduced capacity. Providers worked with the communities they served to understand if individuals were more comfortable with in-person, virtual or a combination of both types of programming and families appreciated the flexibility.

One thing that remained clear during the pandemic is that families need full day supports. **During the last year, programs funded through the Autism Awareness Initiative provided an outlet for individuals with autism while also supporting parents and caregivers of these individuals. As the pandemic continues, individuals with autism and their families will continue to need these opportunities for engagement with their communities. UJA urges the City Council to maintain funding for the Autism Awareness Initiative at $3.2 million in FY 22 in order for these supports and services to remain available to the individuals who need them.**

ii. **Increase funding for the Geriatric Mental Health Initiative (GMHI) to $2,858,310 million in FY 22.**

The GMHI supports organizations to provide individual and group counseling to older adults in non-clinical settings such as senior centers, Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, and food pantries, while also supporting in-home services for homebound elderly. The GMHI also provides financial support for in-home services such as psychiatric evaluations and counseling, services that are often not covered by insurance companies or reimbursed poorly. By offering these services in a non-clinical setting, providers are able to adapt services to the needs of the communities without stigma. Older adults have also benefitted from case management services funded by the GMHI, helping them to get connected to additional social supports like SNAP.

Since the onset of the pandemic, providers have had to change the manner in which they were delivering services. In many instances, straying from meeting older adults in person to providing services telephonically or virtually. For example, one of UJA's nonprofit partners speaks to their older adult clients over the phone instead of performing home visits. Before the pandemic, this same

provider hosted a bi-weekly in-person men's group. The men in this group now receive individual counseling sessions over the phone to replace the in-person group counseling sessions they once received before the pandemic.

**Regardless of how hard providers have worked to continue to serve older adults virtually during the pandemic, isolation and loneliness has increased amongst this population. Providers recognize the continue and increased need for these services in their communities and the important role they will play in helping older adults recover from the pandemic. Additional funding for this program in FY 22 would allow our nonprofit partners to connect more homebound elder adults with the mental health services they require to live fulfilling lives in the community.**

**iii. Increase funding for the Court Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative to $3.4 million in FY 22.**

The Court-Involved Youth and Mental Health Initiative is a citywide initiative that assesses risk for mental health concerns and connects court-involved youth with nonprofits. The initiative also provides family counseling and respite services to families of court-involved youth. These services are essential for preventing entry and re-entry into the juvenile justice system. At-risk youth often lack access to mental health services, family counseling, or other supports that will keep them from juvenile detention. This initiative addresses lack of access to these important interventions through best practices in support services and referrals.

JCCA, one of UJA's nonprofit partners, receives funding through the Court-Involved Youth and Mental Health Initiative. The JCCA's Second Chance program is for youth between the ages of 12 and 17 who have mental and/or behavioral health needs, are court-involved or have behavioral indicators for court involvement. The program provides free mental health/counseling services, educational support and substance abuse referrals, family support services, and advocacy. During the pandemic, JCCA launched virtual workshops and programming on career exploration and skill development. The program also offers work from home internships focusing on remote projects, job training and skills building. The individuals who benefit from this program do not have health insurance. FY 21 funding was used to staff the program as well as pay for expenses related to overseeing the program. Funds were also used to pay stipends to youth involved in the job training program. The stipends were especially beneficial to the many youth involved in the job training program who lived in homes dealing with unemployment**. UJA is requesting the Court Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative be funded at $3,400,000 in FY 22-the same amount it was funded at in FY 20.**

iv. **Increase funding for Developmental, Psychological and Behavioral Health to $2,255,493 in FY 22**

This initiative supports a range of programs and services that address the needs of individuals with substance use disorder, developmental disabilities, and/or serious mental illnesses and their families and caregivers. One of UJA's nonprofit partners oversees two programs with the funding they receive through this initiative. One of the programs provides housing and services to ten people with serious mental illness who are transitioning from inpatient psychiatric hospitalization into a less restrictive setting. The second program is at a clinic where adults with mental illness and older adults receive mental health treatments in a group setting. The clinic provides services to approximately 900 individuals annually. **Both individuals with serious mental illness and/or developmental disabilities have higher mortality rates when exposed to COVID. UJA is requesting this initiative's funding be restored to $2,255,493-the level it was funded at in FY 20.**

v. **Increase funding for Opioid Prevention and Treatment to $4,375,000 in FY 22**

Opioid Prevention and Treatment supports neighborhood-based prevention and treatment efforts related to opioid abuse. JCCA, one of UJA's nonprofit partners receives funding through the Opioid Prevention and Treatment Initiative. JCCA uses this funding for the Kesher Opioid Prevention and Treatment program to target Jewish Orthodox and Bukharian youth between the ages of 14 and 19 in Queens who are at-risk for or engaging in opioid abuse. All participants in the program complete substance use screenings; those who are determined to be exhibiting at-risk behaviors or dealing with substance use issues participate in a 10-week program focused on prevention and recovery tools and resources.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, youth living in the community the Kesher program serves have experienced high rates of depression turning to marijuana to self-medicate. The Kesher program provides a therapeutic outlet for youth who have been socially isolated from friends and family during the last year. The Kesher program has increased the number of cohorts of individuals who meet in person, limiting the number of participants while remaining socially distance and maintaining participation rates. Information on empowerment and well-being is sent virtually to youth as well. Community leaders such as Rabbis and principals continue to refer youth to the Kesher program, recognizing many are at risk for engaging in drug use during this challenging time.

Programs like the Kesher Opioid Prevention and Treatment continue to be needed throughout New York City. **Overdose deaths increased 55% from 2015 to 2019. Early data from the first quarter of 2020 has revealed an additional increase of 28% in overdose deaths compared to the first quarter of 2019. UJA is requesting the City Council to increase funding for this Initiative in FY 22 to $4,375,000 to expand support to providers responding to the opioid epidemic in their communities.**

## 10. Domestic Violence Services

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the need for domestic violence services. In an April 2020 needs assessment survey, UJA's network of nonprofit partners were asked what issues were currently impacting the populations they serve. More than 10% stated that domestic violence is impacting the clients they serve, with one agency stating survivors of domestic violence are one of the populations most negatively impacted by the repercussions of the Covid-19.

The DoVE Initiative supports a range of services for individuals impacted by domestic violence that include case management, crisis intervention, referrals, counseling, empowerment workshops, and legal advocacy. The DoVE initiative has always provided vital supports to individuals living in violent situations. During the pandemic it has literally been a lifesaver for New Yorkers in every neighborhood and community. The DoVE Initiative directs funds to many of UJA's nonprofit partners who are rooted in their communities and have been able to pivot to provide necessary and life-saving supports to survivors of domestic violence during the pandemic. **UJA strongly urges the City Council to maintain funding for the DoVE Initiative at $9.8 million in FY 2022**.

## 11. Investing in Adult Literacy

Currently, there are more than 2.2 million adults in New York City without English language proficiency or a high school diploma. Many of these New Yorkers have been on the frontlines of the pandemic, performing the essential work that has been sustaining our communities – as grocery workers, delivery workers, home care workers, and parents. Others are service workers and domestic workers who have lost

their jobs and incomes and have faced a harsh reality with little or no safety net. While adult literacy education is only one part of the solution, it will be essential to a fair, just, and sustainable recovery.

The need for digital literacy and health literacy; the ability for parents to independently support their children's education; and the ability to access, understand, and interpret complex information has never been more apparent. Adult literacy programs are frequently the main connection that immigrant adult learners have to the wider network of New York City's programs and services. This has become even more evident in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Programs quickly and effectively pivoted to remote support for adult learners by altering group activities, providing information on the rapidly changing health situation, and transforming programming to ensure that adult learners do not get lost. Non-English-speaking parents are being supported through these classes, leaving them better prepared to take on a greater role in the education of their school-aged children, a role that has become necessary in our current environment. Also, the benefit of keeping adult literacy program staff employed is critical as the City faces economic uncertainty and extreme public health concerns as a result of COVID-19. **UJA urges the Council and the Administration to work together to restore and baseline the $12 million in annual funds that was secured in the budget every year from FY17 to FY20 and were reduced to $9.8 million in FY21.**

Additionally, according to a report released by the Literacy Assistance Center based on an online survey of adult literacy programs in New York City looking at the impact of COVID-19 on students and programs, the digital divide remains a serious barrier. Adult literacy program staff who responded to this survey estimated that an average of 65% of their students are facing technology barriers to remote learning. These include obstacles related to technology access, internet connection, hardware, and/or having a safe, quiet space to study. Many students are engaging in remote learning with a smartphone as their only access point. To engage in remote learning, adult students need internet access and the appropriate hardware, digital skills development, and support with digital participation. **UJA urges the Council and the Administration to explore ways to ensure that adult literacy students have access to necessary technology and supports so that they can continue to engage with and benefit from adult literacy programming in a virtual environment.**

**Lastly, UJA urges the Council and the Administration to invest in the adult literacy pilot project that the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCCAL) had worked with the Council to launch prior to the pandemic.** An additional $10.5M investment would quadruple city funding for discretionary funded adult literacy programs. These funds would be used to ultimately maximize the role adult literacy programs can play in advancing COVID recovery, and to demonstrate that greater investment in wrap around support services and resources for adult literacy students lead to significantly greater social and economic benefits for those students, their families, and their communities.

### 12. Supporting Non-Public Schools

Although schools were forced to shift their focus to responding to the COVID pandemic, every-day instructional programs continued. In this year of unprecedented challenges for all schools resulting from the impact of the pandemic, nonpublic schools have spent millions of dollars complying with health protocols to maintain teaching and learning, whether remote or in-person. Costs, so far, have ranged between tens of thousands of dollars to upwards of millions of dollars (depending on school size) for expenses included but not limited to the hiring of additional COVID-related staff, necessary technology upgrades, ongoing school sanitizing, physical protective barriers and signage, personal protective equipment, air filtration system upgrades and the ongoing testing of students and faculty for COVID infections as well as data collection and reporting. It is critical that nonpublic schools be reimbursed for

these expenses and provided additional current-year funding to cover ongoing COVID-related costs. As NYC continues to make great strides in containing the spread of COVID-19, **UJA urges the Administration to ensure that the health and safety of the nonpublic school community is not left behind and that all schools are reimbursed for the cost of COVID-related expenses.**

**UJA also requests that the Administration consider expanding the eligibility criteria for nonpublic schools qualifying for the nonpublic school security guard reimbursement program.** Instead of the current eligibility criteria of a qualifying nonpublic school with more than 300 registered students, UJA requests that the criteria be expanded to enable security to be provided for additional vulnerable institutions and that the eligibility mirror the Federal Nonprofit Security Grant Program. This would allow all nonprofits to be eligible via competitive award.

**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 the organizations that serve them. Thank you for your time and if you have any questions please contact Ariel Savransky at savranskya@ujafedny.org.

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NYC Council Speaker Corey Johnson
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Member of the NYC Council Daniel Dromm
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May 26, 2021

Dear Speaker Johnson and Council Member Dromm,

UNITED SIKHS strongly supports the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families' (CACF) 15% and Growing Campaign in their proposal to create Recovery and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers, a new $4 million NYC Council Citywide Initiative to support social services by Asian American-led and -serving community-based organizations.

Asian American community-based organizations ("CBO's") remain historically under-funded, while struggling to meet the rising needs in our communities. Despite the fact that Asian Pacific Americans comprise over 15% of the population and are the fastest growing group in New York City, our CBO's received only 4.65% of City Council discretionary dollars and less than 1.5% of social service contract dollars in FY 2021. Even prior to the pandemic, Asian American CBO's were underfunded, creating growing wait lists, rising costs, and inadequate resources to fully support our communities in sustaining vital services.

UNITED SIKHS joins over 50 Asian-led and-serving organizations across all five boroughs of New York City demanding equitable funding for the APA community and fully supports the 15% & Growing Campaign. Like many of the organizations supporting the 15% & Growing Campaign, our community has been devastated by the exacerbated impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent data surrounding COVID-19 reveals that Asian Americans are 2x more likely to test positive for the virus than their white counterparts, yet less likely to be tested at all. Asian Americans have also experienced the largest increase in joblessness of all major racial groups in NYC, with an unemployment rate of 25.6% as of May 2020. Our neighborhoods, communities, and businesses have yet to heal from the fears surrounding the virus that have led to an increase in xenophobia, racist attacks, and business and job loss within our communities. Alongside these rising challenges, hate crimes against Asian Americans have spiked by 1,900% in New York City, with more than 3,800 reported incidents in the City over the past year.

UNITED SIKHS joins the collective voice in calling on the New York City Council to create this new and vital initiative to support culturally competent and language accessible direct service programs to address the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes and the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on our communities.

Throughout the pandemic, UNITED SIKHS has been serving the community, attempting to bridge the gap created by language and cultural barriers. We have prepared and delivered over 175,0000 meals to our community and beyond during pandemic. As a community partner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA), UNITED SIKHS has ensured our community remains informed about any important City updates. We distributed PPE along with information about how to stay safe. We have held multiple Covid-19 testing sites, simultaneously assisting with health care enrollment in Panjabi and Hindi. We've held webinars, connecting patients with Panjabi-speaking doctors to explain the coronavirus and how to stay healthy and helping to dispel misinformation. We've held vaccine information sessions, assisted with obtaining vaccine appointments, and ran pop-up sites to vaccinate individuals. As a trusted organization, we've been able to talk to our community in our languages and provide services in locally-accessible and community-recognized locations. We held a blood drive when the blood supply was dangerously low. Finally, we started a Homework Club to ensure our children were able to keep up with their school work during remote learning.

With an $80,000 allocation from this initiative, our organization will be better equipped to augment our culturally-sensitive, language-inclusive work in educating communities about COVID-19 resources and helping them address hardships. Now that the country is lifting restrictions, we could assist with securing employment again, obtaining housing assistance, and accessing healthcare. We can also increase the reach of our current food donation and hot meal campaigns and expand our Homework Club to address where students may have fallen behind. We will also put this money towards initiatives to help breach the racial inequity among Asian Americans, focusing specifically on developing advocacy skills among Asian American youth, who will represent our communities in the decades to come.

UNITED SIKHS commends this initiative for its strong effort to support an inclusive array of organizations that serve and represent the diverse Asian American diasporic communities of New York City. Now more than ever, providing equitable funding to Asian American New Yorkers is necessary in the recourse and revitalization of our communities. We are confident that with the City Council's support, our Asian American-led and -serving organizations can finally receive the fair and adequate funding they need to serve our most vulnerable community members as they recover and heal from tragic events of this past year.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Guneet Kaur
Associate Director, UNITED SIKHS

UnLocal
Community Immigration
Legal Services & Education

**Testimony submitted to the Fiscal 2022 Executive Budget Hearing, City Council Committee on Finance, New York City Council**

**Tuesday, May 25, 2021, 10:00am**

Good morning. My name is Terry Lawson and I am the Executive Director of UnLocal, a community-centered non-profit organization that provides direct community education, outreach, and legal representation to New York City's undocumented immigrant communities. I am also the co-founder and steering committee member of the Bronx Immigration Partnership, a coordinated safety net of legal and social services providers assisting Bronx residents with their immigration-related needs. I am here today to ask the City Council to expand funding for immigration legal services, community education, outreach, and organizing.

UnLocal provides free high-quality legal services for New York's most vulnerable immigrants, many of whom are essential workers, who are seeking employment authorization, asylum, DACA, SIJS, lawful permanent residency, relief from removal, and much more. Last year, our Legal team handled 1000 cases for people across New York City and in parts of Long Island and upstate. Our Queer Immigrant Justice Project works with LGBTQ+ immigrants who

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are seeking asylum and the director of that project, Michael Younker, was named one of the best LGBTQ+ Lawyers under 40 by the National LGBT Bar Association.

UnLocal is also part of the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, along with Make the Road New York and NYLAG, and the lawyers, paralegal, and social worker who serve on our Rapid Response team have been fighting tirelessly during this pandemic to stop deportations and get people out of detention, where their physical and mental health are threatened every day. Our Rapid Response work shows us just how entangled ICE and law enforcement are and continue to be, despite the efforts of advocates and community members to explain to this city's lawmakers how local policing feeds the deportation pipeline. We have been raising the alarm about the dangers and continued harms of city officials collaborating with ICE by telling the story of one of our clients, Javier Castillo Maradiaga, a 27 year old Bronx man who came here when he was 7 years old, was turned over to ICE by this City, and after tireless community organizing and legal strategizing, he was finally released from ICE custody in March.

Over the past year, our Education and Outreach team has been busier than ever partnering with 140 community-based organizations and schools throughout the city, hosting monthly partner calls on rapidly changing law and policy, conducting 68 community events, 47 of which

UnLocal
Community Immigration
Legal Services & Education

were virtual, that reached 8000 attendees, and posting online resources in wide-ranging topics such as the Fund for Excluded Workers, DACA, the NYS Dream Act, unemployment, taxes, the census, and more. UnLocal recognizes that only by providing accurate up-to-date information are we able to counteract the predatory practices of those taking advantage of the confusion and anti-immigrant rhetoric pervading our culture. Under the new administration, laws and policies continue to change at a dizzying pace and our Education and Outreach team keeps the public informed about these changes and their impacts on immigrant New Yorkers.

In an era where the Biden administration continues to detain and deport people, detaining asylum-seekers in so-called migrant facilities, and simultaneously increasing avenues for affirmative immigration relief, UnLocal calls on the City Council to expand funding for immigration legal services and community education. Specifically, UnLocal asks the City Council to enhance funding for the Immigration Opportunities Initiative to allow additional legal services providers to partner with the City Council to provide vital services for our clients and community members. Thank you.

Terry Lawson
Executive Director, UnLocal
terry@unlocal.org

**Testimony**
**New York City Council**
**Committee on Finance**
**Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget Hearing**
**May 25th, 2021**

Good morning Chair Dromm and members of the Committee. My name is Nicole McVinua and I am the Director of Policy at Urban Pathways. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the need to support the human services workforce and to fund increases to CityFHEPS rental vouchers in the Fiscal Year 2022 budget.

Urban Pathways is a nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing provider. We assist single adults through a unique combination of street outreach, drop-in services, safe havens, extended-stay residences, and permanent supportive housing. We also offer a wide range of additional programming to meet the needs of our clients, including our Total Wellness Program and UPwards Employment Program. Last year Urban Pathways served over 3,900 New Yorkers in need.

Throughout the pandemic, our doors have never closed, and our services have never stopped. We have continued all of our programming to assist homeless New Yorkers and to ensure our clients' safety in residential programs. We also provided additional services, such as food and pantry items, along with PPE, cleaning supplies, and up-to-date COVID-19 safety information. In addition, we opened 60 stabilization beds to bring New Yorkers experiencing street homelessness inside to safety. **At great risk to their own health and that of their families, our frontline staff continued to come to work to ensure the wellbeing of our clients and residents.**

Despite this commitment in the face of a global pandemic, our staff receives poverty wages under our City contracts. With contracts that only pay 85 - 87 cents for every dollar of the actual costs to run our programs, it is difficult to ensure our staff receives the pay they deserve. This leads to high staff turnover, and we are currently facing a critical staffing shortage across our organization. We simply cannot run our services without our committed workforce and well-funded City contracts.

**The human services sector stepped up to meet the needs of New Yorkers in crisis despite the fact that we faced a funding crisis long before our City saw its first case of COVID-19. After the City Council demanded Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) funding in the FY22 Preliminary Budget response, Mayor de Blasio announced the addition of $57 million to restore the ICR cut in FY21 and to baseline the full $91 million to sustain the program for future years as part of his FY22 Executive Budget! Thank you for championing this issue! Together, we must ensure this funding makes it into the Adopted Budget!**

**However, the need for the FY22 budget to invest in the essential human services workforce remains. It is critical for the Adopted FY22 budget to include restoration of ICR funding as well as the following core investments in the human services workforce:**

1. **The restoration of the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) on the personnel services line of all human services contracts at a rate of 3%, at a cost of $48 million for FY22.**

2. **A plan for the administration to promote wage equity in the public sector by correcting the pay disparities the human services workforce experiences, as outlined in the City Council's FY22 Preliminary Budget Response.**

Fair pay for human services workers is also an issue of racial and gender equity. 80% of human services workers are people of color and 82% are women. If this year's budget is truly going to reflect an equitable recovery for the City, it must address the inadequate wages and underfunding of the human services workforce. Underfunded contracts and an inability to keep up with service demand (of which 68% of service providers across the City anticipate) comes at a direct cost for communities most impacted by COVID-19 due to income inequality, structural racism, and ableism where our clients, along with many of our staff members, live.

The work our staff does is immensely challenging, and one of the most difficult tasks they face is helping our clients experiencing homelessness find independent, permanent housing. One of the tools they turn to is the CityFHEPS rental voucher. While the CityFHEPS voucher has the potential to provide meaningful access to the private market for low-income New Yorkers, it must be competitive in order to do so, and with a maximum monthly rental allowance of $1,265 for a one-person household, it simply falls short in its efficacy. Only between 4 and 5% of CityFHEPS voucher holders are able to find housing each month, and for many they are only able to rent a room. With the HUD Fair Market Rent for New York City in FY21 at $1,760 for a studio and $1,801 for a one-bedroom, finding an apartment at $1,265 is a frustrating and near impossible task for our clients experiencing homelessness.

**To address homelessness, the City must take a first step in creating adequate access to the private market by raising the maximum rental allowance on CityFHEPS vouchers to at least the Fair Market Rent value. We thank the Council for including this funding in the FY22 Preliminary Budget response, and urge you to include this funding in the Adopted Budget.**

It is impossible to ignore that our services and workers are invaluable to the health and wellbeing of the City, and that having a home has never been more critical than in a global pandemic. The FY22 budget must reflect this. Together we must ensure the restoration of ICR funding, COLA for the human services workforce, and a comprehensive plan to promote wage equity in the sector are all included in the FY22 Adopted Budget, alongside funding to increase the CityFHEPS voucher rental allowance. Thank you so much for your support and the opportunity to testify.

**For questions or further information, please contact:**

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**Testimony by Urban Youth Collaborative**
**Before the NYC Council Committee on Finance**
**May 25, 2021**

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Hello everyone! My name is Matthew, I'm a youth leader at Sistas and Brothas United and the Urban Youth Collaborative, I live in council district 8 in the Bronx. I am in the seventh grade, and I attend James Kiernan junior high school.

My vision for schools in the Bronx is for schools to feel safe, this means the complete removal of cops in schools and implementing more support for students. Schools should be focused on the academic success of students as well as their social and emotional well-being in and outside of schools.

Today, May 25th, is the one year anniversary of George Floyd's murder in Minneapolis. A year ago today we saw cities rise across the county and in particular in NYC we took to our streets calling for you all, our city officials to defund police. Last year, I asked you all to divest $1 Billion dollars from the NYPD. Those of you on this call gaslighted us, not only was 1 Billion not cut, we were delivered a decision for school police to be transferred from the NYPD to DOE instead, which there was and still is strong opposition to this plan.
A change in supervision does not change the fact that these are cops in our schools. Cops who don't make me feel secure and safe in my school or in my neighborhood. I've seen from personal experience how they treat me and my friends on my way to school, in front of my school, at the entrance and in our hallways.

As a student in a music class I have to bring a guitar home to practice and there was a time when I went to school and the School cop said that they would only let me in if they checked my bag and Guitar case for a gun and I got scared, I felt nervous and wanted to cry as they accused me of having a gun me a 11 year old at the time being harshly judged at the door and being treated like a criminal.

Seeing them all over my school just reminds me of when I used to visit a family member at Rikers, the constant surveillance, the pat downs at the door, the bag searchers, It felt exactly the same as going to school.

Today I call on you all to do what is right and pass a budget that will make real investment in students like me. I call on you to invest in **Meaningful Restorative Justice in Schools:** We need $118.53 million to adequately fund RJ in 500 high schools this year. We call for **Adequate Funding for Social Workers and Guidance Counselors**, we need $162 million to begin hiring workers at a ratio of one guidance counselor per 150 students for most schools, and one per 50 students for high needs schools. We also call for **Funding of a Mental Health Continuum**: NYC must invest $15 million for these intensive support and services. Lastly, we call on you to completely divest from school pol

**Testimony by Urban Youth Collaborative**
**Before the NYC Council Committee on Finance**
**May 25, 2021**

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Hello everyone! My name is Juan Torres, I'm a youth leader at Sistas and Brothas United and the Urban Youth Collaborative. I live in council district 15 in the Bronx. I am in the 8th Grade, and I attend Jonas Bronck Academy.

As someone who attends a school that does not have metal detectors and which has a lot less police presence than the surrounding schools in the Fordham area of the Bronx I know it is not hard to achieve school environments free from police. It is not hard to create schools that see students and their lived experiences with compassion and a real investment in their healing and the need for growth as opposed to seeing them as criminals.

Today I am here to urge the City Council to make it your priority this year to completely divest from police and policing practices in schools. In the past the council has pushed back against this ask from Black and Brown young people like myself because Black and Brown Women would be out of jobs, however; this year the council has the opportunity to make an obvious decision to cut $50 million from the school safety division, these funds would have been used to replace 554 school police in our schools. What I call on the council to do is re-invest these funds and to hire more Social workers, Guidance counselors and mental health workers in our schools who are from our communities.

Many of you on this council will no longer be in these seats next year. I call on you to leave a legacy behind that reimagines safety cultivated by young people's vision for Police Free Schools. In order for us the students to be supported we need you all to vote for a budget that moves in the right direction.

Before I close I want to turn to all the Bronx Elected officials, Council members, Ayala, Cabrera, Gibson, Diaz Sr, Riley, Feliz, Dinowitz, Gjonaj and Salamanca it is beyond important that you all vote for a budget that will transform our schools into truly safe and supportive spaces that goes hand and hand with the need to transform our communities in the Bronx. Real safety means the capability to walk the hallways without feeling antagonized and constantly anxious by the presence of cops. It is vital for schools to have school counselors who possess proper training in de-escalating problems AND Social workers with the capacity to support students and their families. We cannot allow the Bronx to continue to be in a cycle of disinvestment, the Bronx Burned in the 70s and decades later we still feel that effect, you can push for a budget that truly invest in our vision, Cut $50 Million from the School Safety Division, invest those funds in schools in the Bronx because we deserve better because it's whose Bronx? Our Bronx! The Bronx gets things done so we hope you get this done!

**Testimony by Urban Youth Collaborative**
**Before the NYC Council Committee on Finance**
**May 25, 2021**

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My name is Jocelyn Palafox Diaz. I live in Staten Island, I am in 11th grade and I am a youth leader at Make the Road NY and the Urban Youth Collaborative. I am here today testifying because for years NYC youth have called for police free schools and the divestment of the School Safety Division's entire $450 million budget and to reallocate those monies into guidance counselors, social workers, and restorative justice practices.

It is a slap in the face to learn from previous hearings that the city keeps planning to spend millions and millions of more dollars to hire new school cops.

My sophomore year was a rollercoaster with the pandemic. My school, like the rest of public schools, was not prepared to deal with the situation. In the mix of confusion my teachers instead of asking how we were feeling they were giving us a bunch of work while they were trying to also figure out technology. I as many other students were not informed by any staff about emotional support to deal with my stress from the pandemic. I became aware that there is lack of funding for social, emotional and mental health support for students.

My school is a community school. This is important to me because community schools are more important than ever in providing the support students and families need as we return. This is where the city should fully invest resources - not on policing. What does it say to me and other students about where the city is choosing to invest their money? **Policing me or supporting me to succeed**? At the Public Safety Committee budget hearing on May 11, the NYPD Deputy Chief of the School Safety Division stated that 554 school police have left the department since January of 2021, equal to nearly fifty million dollars worth of salary funding.

We have to stop spending money on policing schools. Hiring new school safety agents is not what young people like myself want. For years we have been extremely vocal about removing ALL police out of our schools. **We have been demanding to reallocate that funding from policing students to social, emotional and mental health supports.**This $fifty million presents a perfect opportunity for the City Council to invest significant funds in the services and staff that will actually create safety and put students on the path to succeed.

I'm a couple months away from my senior year and after this stressful Sophomore and Junior year I would love to be welcomed to my last high school year with more resources for students and no police. **Now, more than ever we need everyone to listen and stand by us.** Our demands are clear, that means the city making this commitment: do not hire new school police, and use the fifty million dollars to instead invest in an equitable future for all NYC youth.

Thank you.

**Testimony by Urban Youth Collaborative**
**Before the NYC Council Committee on Finance**
**May 25, 2021**

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Hello everyone. My name is Keyanna Bernard, I am 16 years old and a youth leader from Make the Road New York.

Ma'Khia Bryant age 16, Adam Toledo age 13, Daunte Wright age 20, who were recently murdered by police and Anthony Thompson Jr age 17., who was recently murdered by police in his school bathroom. These four people were youth just like me, with so much life ahead of them. The police target, harass, and brutalize Black people in our communities.

Imagine how I feel when the first thing I see when I get to my school building are NYPD school safety agents. Then I join a line of students wasting valuable time that could be spent in the classroom waiting to go through a metal detector. Instead of enhancing our education, school police and metal detectors create an unwelcoming environment. I have been late to many classes and missed out on information and announcements because I'm waiting in a line to go through scanners. The last thing I see when I leave my school are police officers. I feel angry and disappointed that this is my everyday experience and that students are constantly policed and Black and brown youth are pushed into the school-to-prison pipeline.

We heard from previous testimony at a New York City budget hearing that there are currently 554 vacant school cops positions. That equates to $50 million dollars. These positions should stay that way. They should be eliminated. **Instead of wasting money on school cops and policing, the money should be invested in students' futures.** In a survey of New York City students done by the Center for Popular Democracy and the Urban Youth Collaborative. 81% of students said they saw police in their school every day. Yet, only 7% said they had daily interactions with a guidance counselor, social worker, or school nurse. **That is not right.**

**I am asking you, no, I am demanding you divest from school cops and invest in mine and my peer's future.** Start today by committing to no new hires for the school safety division. But don't stop there. We should disband the school safety division and invest the $450 million dollars used to police Black and Brown young people into more guidance counselors, student success centers, and restorative justice services. Police don't make schools safe, **well-resourced communities do.** There is still time to change direction. Use this budget to begin the transformational change us youth need and rightfully deserve. **Do not hire new school police**, and use the $50 million to instead invest in an equitable future for all NYC youth. Thank you.

**Testimony by Urban Youth Collaborative**
**Before the NYC Council Committee on Finance**
**May 25, 2021**

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My name is Dariel Infante and I am a Youth Leader with Future Of Tomorrow and Urban Youth Collaborative. I am 17 years old and a NYC student attending MultiCultural High School. As a Youth Leader, I take responsibility in advocating for the rights and safety of other students. Last week, the NYPD Deputy Chief of the School Safety Division stated that their agency has lost 554 school police positions over the course of the pandemic. Today, I am here to demand that the New York City Council will not hire to replace these positions, and instead reinvest the $50 million in student support staff and programs. I want police free schools and investments in guidance counselors, nurses, restorative justice programming, and school infrastructure.

As an immigrant student in NYC, I attend a public school where my peers and myself would greatly benefit from the reinvestment of $50 million dollars into our school and co-located campus over the course of the next school year. As students, we are going to return to campuses where our peers, teachers, and faculty are gravely traumatized by the COVID, social unrest, and the increased awareness of police brutality against Black and Brown immigrant communities. Cops in our schools criminalize students along racial lines at disproportionate rates with zero consequences. More schools with Black and brown students have an increased police presence in our environment.

The last thing I and the other 1 million plus students in attending New York City public schools need are more police officers and systems that continue to see us as targets and criminals unworthy of simply existing. In NYC public schools, this decrease in officer count is only the start of our campaign efforts to abolish the school to prison pipeline and achieve police free schools. But as the City Council approaches budget asks and a vote for the 2022 budget, we urge you to push for police free schools through not rehiring the 554 lost school safety agents and reinvesting $50 million back into our youth!

**Testimony by Urban Youth Collaborative**
**Before the NYC Council Committee on Finance**
**May 25, 2021**

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My name is Alyssa Figueroa, and I am the Coalition Coordinator of the Urban Youth Collaborative, a coalition made up of student leaders from across the city fighting for Police Free Schools. I am testifying today on behalf of this coalition to urge you to divest from school policing, and invest in student care.

Today is the anniversary of the police murder of George Floyd. Since the last time student leaders and I testified for Police Free Schools two months ago, we have witnessed the police murder of four young people: Daunte Wright (20), Adam Toledo (13), Ma'Khia Bryant (16), and Anthony Thompson Jr. (17), who was murdered by police in his school. It should be no surprise that for many students, especially students of color, police in schools do not represent safety. Yet, the city is set to once again spend nearly $450 million on school policing next year—sending these students back to school in September, after this traumatic year, filled with police violence and a global pandemic, to be greeted by metal detectors and school police. Shame on the city.

With the influx of money from the state and federal government for education, this is not the time to continue investing in the racist, harmful, ineffective and costly system of school policing. It is not enough to invest some money in school support staff without addressing the toll of policing on youth.

Two weeks ago at the Public Safety Committee's Budget Hearing, the NYPD Deputy Chief of the School Safety Division stated that 554 school police positions have been lost since January 2020. This is equal to about $50 million that is currently in the SSD's budget for FY22. The Council should reinvest this $50 million into staff and programs that support students.

We need this money to meaningfully fund student care. NYC has never fully funded restorative justice practices. Now, the Council is calling for about $50 million for restorative justice practices while the mayor is calling for $12 million for it. We are calling for $118 million for it so we can fully implement rj in 500 high schools with coordinators, trainings, curriculum and more. We need $162 million to ensure there is one social worker and guidance counselor per 150 students. We need $15 million for a mental health continuum, and we need $15 million for college access programs.

We urge you to work toward Police Free Schools by rejecting the hiring of new school police and reinvest that money in real solutions that will make NYC a more equitable place to live, learn, and grow. Thank you.

**Testimony by Dr. Cynthia Maurer, Executive Director**
**Visiting Neighbors, Inc.**
**to New York City Council's Finance Committee**
**FY22 Executive Budget Hearing: May 25th 2021**

My name is Dr. Cynthia Maurer. I am Executive Director of Visiting Neighbors.

Thank you for this opportunity to give voice to the needs of our City's often forgotten population – who is also one of our most vulnerable -seniors, especially the oldest old, the 85+ year old's, the homebound and frail elderly, seniors who spend their days alone, unable to attend senior centers; so isolated that they have no incentive to eat their meals or to see their doctors. Our city's seniors where amongst those who got hit hardest from the pandemic. Visiting Neighbors' staff came into their office regularly throughout the pandemic to coordinate service activities safe, including meeting new volunteers in person who wanted to help, as well as conduct interviews and training with them via on-line, Zoom, Face Time etc., to make sure their identities matched their IDs and that updated safety protocols were followed.

For the past 49 years, Visiting Neighbors has earned an outstanding reputation as a trusted lifeline for seniors and caregivers. We serve more than 1,000 seniors each year in lower Manhattan and parts of Queens. We provide vital support services to seniors and their caregivers who have nowhere else to turn. The average age of the seniors we serve is 89, and we will soon have 16 seniors who are age 100+.

Our clients tend to be frail, with one or more ailments. We serve a diverse group of individuals, most of whom live on fixed incomes and can't afford to pay for help. There are no income eligibility requirements, nor a fee for services. All of our clients are able to self-direct. The senior who comes to us usually lives alone and has little or no family nearby that they can turn to for support. They are often isolated, nervous about crossing streets and getting to and from their appointments safely. Many have health concerns, have poor communication with their doctors and need help with errands. Our volunteers accompany clients taking them outside for fresh air, to socialize or take a walk. Our seniors face a myriad of health concerns including loneliness, anxiety, mobility issues, financial struggles and losses of all kinds including family, friends, pets, abilities, income and pride. Some individuals do not take care of themselves, dismiss their physical problems, ineffectively articulate their needs and/or are fearful of many things including falling, learning about a potential diagnosis, having to cope with more loss in the near future and judgment from others. These concerns have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Many seniors do not feel comfortable asking for help. Visiting Neighbors' seniors feel more confident knowing we are here to listen, offer support and guidance. We earn their trust. They understand that we do not judge them and know they will be treated with respect, empathy and kindness.

We are providing essential and life-enriching services and we will continue to be on the frontlines, ready to serve our community and existing clients as their needs increase, especially the oldest-old (age 85+) who often need more attention from our staff. Our long-term goal is to help make seniors lives happier, safer, less lonely and frightening, address their health concerns, prepare for emergencies, cope with many changes and help seniors be better connected to others, empowered to identify and communicate their needs, be better informed, more social and express more joyous feelings. Visiting Neighbors will continue to advocate on behalf of seniors to be better understood, treated with compassion, dignity and respect and to not be ignored, overlooked, forgotten and to help foster their self-esteem and self-worth. Many of our clients have expressed to us - *we are the only family they have*.

Visiting Neighbors has remained open with staff working full-time, providing non-interrupted services to our city's most vulnerable population – frail, isolated homebound seniors, age 60 through 107 (Our 107-year-old passed peacefully at home from natural causes in Dec 2020). Visiting Neighbors' seniors, including new individuals we helped during COVID-19, feel more confident knowing we are here to listen, offer support and guidance. Our volunteer visitors also serve as extra eyes and ears for our professional staff, alerting us immediately of any change in a senior's mental, physical or emotional condition so they can get the attention they need promptly, before irreversible damage is done.

We are dependent on the support of the Council. Discretionary funds have helped us stay in business so we can keep our seniors safe and at home. We are most grateful for the funding to support our nursing and wellness program (a lifesaving program) we received through the *Senior Centers and Enhancement Initiative*. It literally has been a lifesaver – enabling us to continue to keep our doors open and to provide essential services to our frail and vulnerable elderly neighbors.

This year marks Visiting Neighbors 49th year of service to the community. We remain true to our mission of providing vital support services that help seniors remain independent, safe and able to live in their own cherished apartments. With the support of hundreds of dedicated volunteers, recruited, trained and supervised by our professional staff, our seniors get the help they need as they struggle with the inevitable challenges of aging, often alone.

Visiting Neighbors' looks forward to helping the Council meet the seniors' growing needs. As our seniors are living longer, their needs often become more complex and require more time and attention**.**

**Programs like Visiting Neighbors are compassionate, extremely cost-effective, and they work!** ***Please include these seniors and organizations like Visiting Neighbors in your plans and commit the needed resources.***
***We need you and our seniors need us!***

## Some of the Major FY21 Outcomes of Visiting Neighbors thanks to the FY21 support from New York City Council:

Visiting Neighbors has been active and open with staff in the office and has continued operating regularly, with the provision of certain restrictions put in place by the CDC. Protocols have been kept in place (and regularly updated) to keep everyone (volunteers, seniors and staff) as safe as possible.

1. As of June 2020, as medical appointments and procedures were on the schedule again, volunteers resumed escorts for seniors for their medical appointments and procedures. When needed, seniors have also been escorted to/from the polls for voting, banks, getting their COVID-19 vaccines and other vital errands. For those unable to go out volunteers helped seniors with mail in ballads, drops off to post offices, getting seniors' pets to vets, picking up from pharmacies and delivery of those medicines and other medical/ health related supplies and getting/ bringing seniors mail to them when they couldn't leave their apartments.
2. *Contactless Shopping/ Errands* for Visiting Neighbors' seniors have continued since the start of the pandemic. Access to food and essential supplies continues to be a main focus, as does, having seniors maintain connections to the outside, others and correct health information. We continue working with other charities, one of which delivers "gourmet meals" to our seniors who are in their catchment area. Those seniors really looked forward during this crisis to the delicious meals they received – especially the Saturday meals and we continue to work with local restaurants that have been able and willing to donate meals to our seniors that our volunteers then deliver.
3. In an abundance of caution for both our seniors and volunteers, ***Friendly Visiting*** has happened with some necessary restrictions (volunteers setting up chairs in hall ways, visiting with the needed distance in lobbies or visiting at home with PPE and with the proper 6ft distance).
4. ***Telephone Reassurance*** program has been operating in full force (over 13,000 hours to date from the start of FY2020). Volunteers and staff contact seniors who were/are feeling isolated, very lonely and afraid or want a check-in call to get updated information or to make sure they are ok.
5. ***Health and Wellness and Info*****:** Visiting Neighbors sent out numerous mailings from July 1st 2020 to present, to 1400 neighborhood seniors that included safety information, health and wellness tips including staying calm, coping with depression and communications with medical professionals, in home (easy, some chair exercise and stretches) exercises and mental stimulation through games, quizzes, puzzles and riddles. Staff has done a lot of cheering up – not only seniors, but to volunteers (ages 17- 78), who also expressed sadness, anxiety, depression, anger, fear and frustration. We reminded everyone around us that we were open and are here to assist them whenever they needed us.

6. Some of our more ambulatory seniors began suffering from “cabin fever”, weather permitting and of they felt well enough to go out and with both volunteer and seniors using PPE (donated, purchased and hand-made PPE) distributed by staff, we began a ***Therapeutic Walking*** program. Volunteers take seniors out for a walk and maybe a short time sitting on a park bench.
7. Even more essential now; we continue to celebrate a senior’s birthday with sending personalized cards and a special tribute to a senior reaching 100 years old by joining our *Centenarian Club*, which currently has a dozen members and could have 16 by the summer. We honor all of our seniors and support them as they struggle with the normal and not so normal challenges of aging.
8. We also dealt with a lot of mourning and grief (some caused by COVID-19) and all the painful emotions that go with it and have provided individual emotional support to seniors and volunteers who have suffered loss of spouse/partner, child, sibling or other relative, friend, neighbor or pet.

**All of this important work would not have been possible had it not been for the support of our NYC Council. A special thanks to:**
**Hon. Margaret Chin, Hon. Karen Koslowitz, Hon. Keith Powers and Hon. Carlina Rivera – You are our Champions as we continue our mission of ‘Neighbors helping Older Neighbors” remain independent, active, informed and in their own cherished homes. The chair of the Aging committee especially is our hero! Next year Visiting Neighbors will be celebrating 50 years of serving as a life-line to our city’s senior population and we hope to be here for the next fifty years.**

Organizations like us must receive the support we need so we can continue to keep our doors open and help our City’s elderly remain safe, healthy and confident with the knowledge that they have not been cast aside by society. We are appreciative of the support of the Council. We are counting on you again so we can continue to help our City's seniors survive and thrive. *Together we make a huge impact on the lives of our elderly neighbors’ and enable them to remain independent, active, informed, safe and as well as possible, at home and connected members of our community.*

Thank you.

*Cynthia*

Cynthia Maurer, Ph.D.
Executive Director

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# City Council-Discretionary Funding
# New Funding Request

## Gender Affirmation Program (GAP) Provides Nation's First Home Care Services for Transgender Population

**Background:** Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) plays an important role in serving transgender and nonconforming patients who undergo gender affirmation surgery. The first of its kind in the U.S., VNSNY's GAP has provided post-surgical care to more than 700 patients since 2016, and expects to care for 300 patients in 2021. Home care typically lasts two to eight weeks. Each patient receives several home nursing visits per week at the start of care, with the schedule then tapering off as recovery progresses.

**Needs Grow/Unmet During COVID-19:** While health plans (Medicaid managed care plans for low-income individuals) reimburse gender affirmation surgery and limited post-operative care, there are significant gaps in care that are not reimbursed, but which are critically important to the gender affirmation surgery recovery process.

- **Supplies and services following surgery:** Individuals recovering from gender affirmation procedures often struggle to obtain hygiene and medical supplies, transportation to and from medical appointments, and other basic goods and services necessary to appropriately care for oneself post-surgery.
- **Longer-term psychosocial supports:** Facing stigmatization, many individuals struggle to re-enter society after gender affirmation surgery. They require counseling and social supports, and links to culturally-competent community resources for months if not years after surgery.

GAP has the potential to become a model for post-surgical care in this rapidly growing area. As such, it requires careful monitoring and evaluation to understand the impact of the program and its individual components on patient outcomes.

Gender affirmation surgery was temporarily paused resulting in 60 cases of backlog surgeries. These surgeries can take up to a year to get scheduled. Healthcare providers are now trying to catch-up with the demand. As COVID-19 is still a threat to New York, the visits from our staff are even more important to make sure the patient isn't isolated and healing correctly – to avoid readmission to the hospital.

**Challenge:** The gender affirmation procedure is not only a physical change, but touches many other aspects of a person's life — gender identity, body image, personality, finances, and frequently the attitudes of others. This population faces unique social, economic, medical, and psychological challenges, social isolation, and difficulty finding providers sensitive to their specific concerns. Trans people exhibit high rates of suicide, homelessness, unemployment, and have higher rates of poverty than the general population. Many are unable to find safe and accepting places of work, and some may turn to sex work as a result.

**Request:** VNSNY requests that the City Council invest in this unique but vital program for transgender individuals. ***We are requesting $350,000 to help at least 300 individuals under VNSNY's care transition to society successfully following gender affirmation surgery.*** This funding would:

1. Establish a **Patient Assistance Fund** that would help patients purchase necessary supplies and services not covered by Medicaid and insurance for an estimated 170 patients;
2. Provide **additional care management, and social and emotional support** for patients for up to one year after their surgery; and
3. Fund an **evaluation by VNSNY's Center for Home Care Policy & Research**, which would follow patients for one-year post-surgery and evaluate the impact of GAP on a patient's satisfaction with health care providers, quality of life, and re-integration into society.

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# City Council-Discretionary Funding New Request

## NYC DOHMH Cut Funding to Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) – Restore to Serve More First-Time Bronx Families

**Background:** The Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) has partnered with the City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) since 2006, to provide free, at-home nursing services to some of New York's most vulnerable population. Through NFP, VNSNY serves more than 800 mothers each year in the Bronx – and has provided care to more than 6,000 families since its inception. The evidence-based program pairs a nurse from VNSNY with an expecting mother. To qualify for this program, the first-time mother must be less than twenty-eight weeks pregnant and be low-income. Most of the mothers who qualify for this program receive other government programs, such as food stamps; Medicaid; WIC; and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

**Serving First-Time Mothers During COVID-19:** The NFP nurse helps the mother throughout her pregnancy, providing tips for a successful pregnancy, and assists the mother and newborn through the child's second birthday – providing health, development, safety, and nutrition tips for raising the child, and refers the mother to additional resources for needed support services.

During the pandemic, our Bronx NFP program has been able to provide over 450 families with access to basic necessities, such as diapers, formula, wipes, cribs, clothing, food, rent assistance, and other healthcare needs. VNSNY quickly shifted to exclusive telehealth visits and enrollments - screening clients for symptoms of COVID-19 and providing factual information and anticipatory guidance while dispelling myths. For example, nurses initially kept families apprised of changing procedures for clinic visits so women knew what to expect and could plan accordingly.

**Challenge:** This vulnerable population deals with several challenges, including emotional, financial, and physical stresses that impact the child's birth, as well as their early life development. These early challenges can mold future life outcomes for the child, too. However, as a result of the City's budget deficit, this program has seen its funding cut.

NFP is highly effective according to published research. NFP can reduce child abuse and neglect by 48% and emergency room visits from accidents and poisonings by 56%. It has led to a 59% reduction in child arrests at age 15 and significant improvements in cognitive and academic performance among 18-year olds. [1] Another study found NFP net saved the government $4,732 per enrolled family in public benefit costs.[2]

**Request:** Mayor de Blasio has previously allocated funding for the NFP program, but recent cuts at the city level have left NFP providers worried about adequate funding. ***As a result of these cuts, we are requesting an additional $300,000 in funding. This would allow us to support the work of two nurses and serve about 50-55 families.***

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[1] Harriet Kitzman, David L. Olds, Michael D. Knudtson, Robert Cole, Elizabeth Anson, Joyce A. Smith, Diana Fishbein, Ralph DiClemente, Gina Wingood, Angela M. Caliendo, Christian Hopfer, Ted Miller and Gabriella Conti
Pediatrics December 2019, 144 (6) e20183876; DOI: https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-3876
[2] David L. Olds, Harriet Kitzman, Elizabeth Anson, Joyce A. Smith, Michael D. Knudtson, Ted Miller, Robert Cole, Christian Hopfer and Gabriella Conti
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# City Council-Discretionary Funding Restoration Request

## Mandated Nursing Services at 30 DFTA-Funded Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs)

**Background:** The Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) has been committed to providing nursing services to NORCs since the 1990s. Today VNSNY serves 30 New York City Department for the Aging-funded (NYC DFTA) NORC programs who address the needs of more than 13,300 elderly residents throughout NYC.

**Caring for the Vulnerable – Before and During COVID-19:** Many seniors have found themselves isolated during the public health emergency (PHE) – making the services provided by the NORCs – even more important. The NORC nurse is a valued and important member of the interdisciplinary team, helping staff and clients alike better understand health-related issues and concerns, and their impact on the client's ability to remain at home. NORC nurses address the health care needs of NORC members through health assessment, health education, health care advocacy, and linkages to needed care. Many vulnerable NORC members have multiple chronic illnesses that make them at greater risk for hospitalizations, emergency department visits and poor health outcomes. The most common chronic diseases among members are high blood pressure, depression, diabetes, arthritis, and high cholesterol. NORC residents value the consistent quality support and direction provided by the nurse and the health care advocacy that is provided on their behalf.

VNSNY NORC nurses have responded to the PHE by staying in contact with all of the community members they serve. NORC nurses, in coordination with our social service partners, have sponsored informational sessions to dispel COVID-19 myths and educate residents about practical ways to stay healthy and address their health concerns – typically through regular telephone and video calls to address residents' questions or concerns directly. Our nurses have provided guidance and support to residents to enable them to best self manage their chronic health issues during this pandemic. Nurses have linked those who are unstable with health care providers to address their unique health issues at a time where many medical offices are closed, have reduced their access or are difficult to reach.

**Challenge:** As of Fiscal Year 2020, pro bono NORC nursing that was previously provided by VNSNY and several other providers, could no longer be sustained. NORCs were left to cover these costs on their own and sought assistance from the City Council to provide financial support for this important service.

**Request:** City Council discretionary funding for NORC nursing would allow these vital services to continue to deliver critical social and health-focused services with the goal of supporting successful aging in place. NORCs and healthcare providers are requesting ***$1.3 million to help maintain nursing services for thousands of seniors in NORCs. We thank the City Council for recognizing the importance of this service and for providing this funding for the past two years.***

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# City Council-Discretionary Funding Restoration Request

## Bronx Geriatric Mental Health Initiative (GMHI) Addresses Behavioral Health Where It's Needed Most

**Background:** With over 30 years of experience, the Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) was one of the first organizations in New York City to provide in-home geriatric mental health outreach services.

**Increased Demand for Behavioral Health Services During COVID-19:** Council funding supports the work of two psychiatric social workers. The social worker screens adults 55 or older in the Bronx, with an emphasis on home-bound individuals for depression and alcohol/substance use, and provides direct in-home supportive counseling. This social worker also refers those who test positive for depression and alcohol/ substance use, and aren't homebound to a qualified mental health professional within one business day.

In Fiscal Year 2020, the program provided screenings and/or counseling sessions to 381 Bronx residents – including during COVID-19. Since March 2020, we have provided telehealth sessions – and restarted providing in-person care in September (with all the required personal protective equipment and precautions) – to 28 older adults who are home-bound and otherwise unable to access these services. One of the disturbing trends we are seeing is elderly residents who are feeling increasingly anxious and depressed during COVID-19 – and find themselves isolated. To help, in addition to the regular counseling sessions, our staff have provided more concrete case management services – such as linkages to food, finding medical care, and assisting with medication refill deliveries.

**Challenge:** In the Bronx, well before COVID-19, rates of depression and substance use among older adults were higher than citywide averages. This is compounded by the fact that the elderly population continues to grow, placing a significant strain on a fragmented system not well equipped to serve this population in their homes. VNSNY meets this challenge by providing a higher level of behavioral health assessment and care in the home.

**Request:** Last year, almost all funding for City Council-discretionary behavioral health grants saw their funding cut – unfortunately during a time when behavioral health needs were needed more than ever. ***VNSNY is requesting that funding be completely restored to $162,000 to help more than 400 individuals.*** The application targets the entire Bronx Borough.

***Case study: How we are making a difference***

Camila (not her real name), a Spanish speaking 85 years old female, was diagnosed with depression and anxiety, was isolated from her community and family, and no longer attending church, which she had been very connected to since her youth. She was refusing to leave home, and needed home health services for the last 10 years. GMHI provided mental health treatment. The therapist used cognitive and behavior therapy to help her discuss improving connections with family members and reconnect to her religious community. She set goals with the client to call her family rather than wait for them to come to her. The client was able to ask the home health aide to help her go to church at least once a week. She was given calming breathing techniques and positive visualization techniques. She reported reduced depression and anxiety and improved sleep.

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# City Council-Discretionary Funding Restoration Request

## VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care Veterans Program

**Background:** VNSNY plays a critical role in improving outreach and care for veterans in need of end-of-life care in New York City (NYC). Founded in 2015, the VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care Veterans Program has served over 4,000 veterans, and provides hospice care to about 190 veterans on any given day.

Critical to the success of this program are VNSNY's growing partnerships and education programs with Veteran Affairs (VA) hospitals as well as other NYC-based veterans outreach programs. In 2020, VNSNY provided 25 community-based education sessions.

VNSNY has the largest hospice program in NYC, and we are recognized as the only *Level 5 We Honor Veterans* program serving all five boroughs - which is a nationally-recognized program operated by the VA and National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization to empower hospice professionals to meet the needs of dying veterans.

**Serving Our Veterans During COVID-19:** While VNSNY has made tremendous inroads in connecting veterans and their families to compassionate end-of-life care, we know there are many veterans each year that are not even aware that services like ours exist. VNSNY currently has a program director, a per diem VA benefits specialist and coordinator, and two hospice liaisons to cover all five boroughs, and we struggle to keep up with the growing need for our services. We are seeing the greatest demand for services in Brooklyn and Manhattan.

We have been able to provide care throughout COVID-19 and have continued to conduct virtual events with community organizations and veteran service organizations (i.e. the American Legion). Our liaisons have been able to provide continued support through telehealth visits, securing benefits like home-delivered meals, and advocating for veterans' VA services and benefits. This includes recovering critical government documents that are imperative to a veteran's ability to apply for various veteran benefits.

**Challenge:** Approximately 168,000 veterans live in NYC, and Brooklyn (Kings County) leads the top five counties in New York State at 53,000 veterans. The demographics of the veterans' population are changing. Minority veterans are predicted to increase from 23% to 33% over the next 20 years. Hispanic veterans will increase from 7% to 11%. The number of female Veterans is expected to double to 18% by 2045. Moreover, there are about 18 million veterans over the age of 65 – and about 1,200 die every day; of those deaths 96% occur outside of a VA facility in our own communities.

**Request:** We are grateful to the City Council for ***providing $60,000 in Fiscal Year 2021, and we are requesting $150,000 to expand the VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care Veterans Program to serve more veterans throughout NYC.*** Additional funding will support two additional staff, solidifying VNSNY's approach to providing specialized outreach to veterans at the end of life:

1) Educate and improve Veterans access to their VA benefits;
2) Expand partnerships with Veterans hospitals and groups (especially within Brooklyn and Manhattan); and
3) Provide education to community-based providers for Veterans' special needs at the end-of-life.

Funds will also purchase materials for veteran recognition ceremonies at the bedside, including pins, certificates, and the yarn used by volunteers who lovingly knit blankets. In addition, it will help purchase "Challenge Coins" – which shows VNSNY's support for each branch of military service and given to enhance morale. Private funding from foundations and donations will cover all budgeted program costs.

Volunteers of America
GREATER NEW YORK

**Testimony of Linda Rosenthal,**
**Director of Early Childhood Educational Services**
**for New York City Council**
**Committee on Finance**
**Re: Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget**

**May 25, 2021**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the proposed Executive Budget. My name is Linda Rosenthal and I am Director of Early Childhood Educational Services for Volunteers of America-Greater New York. I oversee the Bronx Early Learning Center, a 4410 preschool special education program for children with significant developmental delays/disabilities, which is approved by the New York State Education Department and under contract with the New York City Department of Education to provide multidisciplinary evaluations, special education services and therapeutic services to preschool students with disabilities. We are not a private school, and we serve New York City's students.

I am here today to ask that the executive budget include salary increases for the teachers in the 4410 preschool special education programs. Under the city's salary parity agreement, this is only fair. Currently, there is a big gap in pay between public school teachers and the teachers at community-based organizations such as our early childhood program. The very real concern is that our teachers, who until now have remained with our programs out of dedication to our children and families, will be forced to leave for the far higher-paying public school**s** Headstart and childcare positions in response to the realities of their own life's needs. This will be tragic. This will also be unfair to our students who deserve to have a New York State Certified teacher, as well the students attending all other early childhood programs in New York City**.**

A number of CBOs, which operate the majority of preschool special education programs in New York City—have closed due to insufficient funding or have converted their programming to school-age classes. These CBO program are equipped to address the significant issues with which these students present and are best able to provide the mandated services on a child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Parents become alarmed/concerned when their young child, whose developmental milestones are delayed and perhaps their child has received a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, and this realization can throw families into a tailspin. When advised by their local school district to enroll their child in a preschool special education program as quickly as possible, desperate parents worry they are missing their time-limited opportunity to give their child the best possible chance of building a foundation for success in school and in life if the local public school's Three-K or Pre-K for all classrooms are not equipped to meet the child's needs.

That's where CBO preschool special education programs like ours come in. VOA-Greater New York has been in the preschool special **e**ducation field since the mid 1980s. Our teachers are skilled and dually certified in special education *and* early childhood education. This dual certification is not a requirement for the NYCDOE teachers.

When our preschool children graduate, they are placed into the least restrictive environment possible. Children who attend preschool special education programs such as ours are prepared and do well during their school age years**.**

ALL children deserve New York State certified teachers. Our teachers in the 4410 preschool special education programs are not being treated equitably, and are forced to leave our programs for higher paying positions**.** While the City has made strides toward salary parity for CBO early childhood educators working in child care centers and Head Start Programs, teachers working in CBO preschool special education programs were not included. As a result, effective October 2021, CBO preschool special education teachers will now be the lowest-paid teachers in the City – including $20,000 less than Headstart and childcare teachers, despite serving some of the City's highest-need students. If our teachers leave, and we must close our doors, the children will have to attend the public schools which may not have the space or expertise to absorb these thousands of students into their local Three-K and Pre-K for All classrooms.

The City must extend salary parity to teachers of CBO preschool special program**s** so they may continue to support preschool students with disabilities. On behalf of Volunteers of America-Greater New York and the Bronx Early Learning Center, we thank Council Member Treyger, Chairman Drumm, and members of the City Council Finance Committee, for your support.

WE ACT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

**Empowering communities to Power Change**

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May 26, 2021}

WE ACT for Environmental Justice
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**RE: Funding Environmental Justice Efforts**

Dear Finance Committee:

WE ACT for Environmental Justice, an organization based in Harlem, has been fighting environmental racism at the city, state, and federal levels for more than 30 years. We recognize and fight to remedy the negative cumulative impacts of unjust policies that have plagued communities of color for decades.

We write to thank the City Council in supporting the passing of Local Law 60 & 2017 Local Law 64 of 2017 to codify environmental justice into NYC decision-making.

**We now ask that you provide funding of $1M to the Environmental Justice Program for fiscal year 2022.** This will enable the Mayor's Office of Climate Policy and Programs to properly execute their plans to consult impacted communities and to do meaningful outreach as outlined by Section 3-1006-f of Local Law 64 (2017).

Local Law 60 (2017) requires that a citywide study of environmental justice be conducted. This study will identify the locations and boundaries of environmental justice areas within the City, describe environmental concerns affecting these areas and identify data, studies, programs and other resources that are available and that may be used to advance environmental justice goals. All of this data will be publicly available in a new established environmental justice portal.

Local Law 64 (2017) requires the establishment of an Environmental Justice Advisory Board, composed of environmental justice advocates, academics, and public health experts, to work with the City on identifying and addressing environmental injustices. Additionally, City agencies must work with the Advisory Board to develop plans to address environmental injustices in communities of color and low-income communities in consultation with the impacted communities.

There are countless environmental justice issues that need to be identified and addressed in NYC. The Environmental Justice Program has the potential to have a significant, positive impact in improving the lives of New Yorkers who have been systematically denied power and visibility when shaping their communities and neighborhoods. The Environmental Justice Program does require funding in order to right the wrongs of the past and present and to prevent more injustice in the future.

Member of EarthShare New York
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Since the inception of Local Laws 60 & 64 there have been many challenges in achieving the City's environmental justice goals due to lack of financial support for the Environmental Justice Program. Challenges include:

- Inability to do effective outreach to environmental justice communities in order to have meaningful conversations, develop relationships with community stakeholders and build an inclusive decision making processes
- Proactively engaging and collaborating with local and community based environmental justice groups
- Completing the Environmental Justice for All Report mandated by Local Law 60

These challenges obstruct the goals of the Environmental Justice Program and lack of funding will further exacerbate the environmental injustices that impacted communities face. The Mayor's commitment to environmental justice must be supported by this committee.

**For these reasons and more, we urge the City Council to allocate $1M of funding to the Environmental Justice Program for fiscal year 2022.**

**Testimony Before**
**The New York City Council Committee on Finance**
**New York City's Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program (MCCAP)**

**Testimony of Davon Russell, President**
**Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation**
**May 25, 2021**

I am the President of the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco), and **I am writing in support of the restoration and increase of funding for the New York City's Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program (MCCAP) from $425,000 to $750,000 in the FY22 budget**.

MCCAP's Mission
New York City's Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program (MCCAP) provides culturally and linguistically competent assistance to New Yorkers about how to enroll in and use health care and coverage. The program relies on the Community Service Society (CSS) and a network of 12 community-based organizations (CBOs), of which our organization is part that work directly with the most vulnerable populations who struggle to interact with the health care system, including enrolling in and understanding health insurance, and accessing low-cost health care.

MCCAP's History
MCCAP first started in 1998 as a model consumer assistance program funded by the City of New York. The program was dismantled in 2010 when the City Council eliminated funding for Fiscal Year 2011. Between 1998 and 2010, MCCAP served more than 140,000 residents in all five boroughs through a network of 26 CBOs led by CSS. In 2019, the New York City Council restored $500,000 in funding for MCCAP to address the growing need among underserved residents for help with navigating the healthcare system and accessing affordable care. The program was officially launched in February 2020. In FY21, MCCAP's funding was cut by 15% due to the fiscal crisis.

MCCAP's Services
MCCAP uses a "hub-and-spokes" model to provide services. CSS acts as the hub with its live, toll-free helpline, while advocates at 12 CBOs serve as the spokes that provide in-person services in every borough. The advocates are trained and supported by CSS to help people:

- Navigate and make the most out of their health insurance coverage
- Resolve health insurance problems
- Get prior authorizations
- Access specialists, out-of-network services, and affordable healthcare
- Apply for hospital financial assistance programs

MCCAP services are advertised in multi-lingual fliers to ensure that immigrants and linguistic minorities are informed of these services. In addition, information about NYC MCCAP's Helpline at CSS is also available through insurance notices, NYC's 311, websites, and through social media.

Why MCCAP

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the enduring inequities that permeate almost every part of our healthcare system and prevent New York City's communities of color, immigrants, people who are LGBTQ, and people with disabilities and mental health or substance use disorders from accessing the care they need. Additionally, anti-immigrant coverage exclusions, rising health care prices and a complex healthcare system create additional barriers to care. All these barriers and the distrust in the healthcare system and institutions among these communities pose great challenges to the city's path to recovery. This is where a program like MCCAP can make a significant difference because of its community-based approach that can remove many of these barriers and provide reliable information about COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccines.

COVID-19 Response

- MCCAP's helpline and CBOs have provided much-needed advocacy assistance to 3,000 clients who have struggle to secure coverage and medically necessary care during this difficult time.
- MCCAP is helping clients request prior authorizations over the phone when their providers are unable to do so.
- MCCAP is providing insurance navigation to those who have lost their job-based coverage or are uninsured.
- MCCAP is providing information about new COVID-19 cost-sharing waiver policies for people who would like to access COVID-19 related testing and treatments under their current policies.
- MCCAP is helping undocumented clients access Emergency Medicaid services that now cover COVID-19 testing and treatment.
- MCCAP is addressing social determinants of health, such as food insecurity and unemployment, by helping clients apply for food stamps and unemployment insurance.

MCCAP's Impact

- MCCAP agencies provide services in more than 15 languages and at 15 different locations across all five boroughs.
- 74% of our clients speak a language other than English at home.
- 77% of our clients are people of color.
- Since its launch in February 2020, MCCA has handled nearly 4,300 cases.
- We obtain a favorable outcome for our clients in 90% of the cases.

About WHEDco

WHEDco is a community development organization founded on the radically simple idea that all people deserve to live in healthy, vibrant communities. We build award-winning, sustainable, affordable homes – but our work is not over when our buildings are complete. WHEDco believes that to be successful, affordable housing must be anchored in strong communities of which residents can be proud. Since its founding in 1992, WHEDco's mission has been to create and bridge access in the South Bronx to resources that create thriving neighborhoods – from high-quality early education and after-school programs, to fresh, healthy food, cultural programming, and economic opportunity. Our services impact the lives of over 40,000 people annually.

WHEDco is the only MCCAP partner organization in the Bronx, where for much of the pandemic, COVID infection and death rates were the highest in New York State. For over 10 years, the Bronx has ranked lowest (#62) among New York State's 62 counties in terms of health outcomes —namely, rates of mortality (premature death) and morbidity (poor or fair health, poor physical health days, poor mental health days, and low birth-weight). We work in the poorest urban congressional district (CD-15) in the

nation, where 48% of all children live in poverty, and there is a large population of immigrants, many of whom are isolated and uninsured. Through WHEDco's Family Support and Counseling Services, South Bronx residents gain access to critical public benefits and are linked to resources and care that support their families. MCCAP funding has enabled us to partially support an additional full-time Case Manager to deepen our work around health benefits access. As a result, complex cases that were previously referred to organizations that focus on resolving difficult health benefits access issues, are now being addressed in-house, thereby preventing cases from falling through the cracks.

Ask of City Council
We urge the NYC Council to **restore funding for MCCAP from $425,000 to $750,000 in the FY22 budget. MCCAP's funding was cut by 15% in FY21 due to the fiscal crisis.** But the need for health advocacy services has only intensified during the pandemic. Without a restoration of the FY20 funding levels, we will be limited in the assistance we can provide during this difficult time and some partner organizations may be forced to shut down MCCAP services in FY22. Moreover, with the State's budget proposing even deeper cuts to Article 6 funding, the Council's intervention to preserve the MCCAP program is needed now more than ever.

I would like to thank the New York City Council for allowing me to share this testimony and hope that MCCAP remains a priority and receives a much-needed increase in Fiscal Year 2022.

Davon Russell
President
Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation
May 25, 2021

I would like to thank the council members for their time and attention to the issue of 4410 preschool funding.

4410 preschools need your help now. We need you to understand what is at stake. There is a crisis developing that requires immediate action on your part.

The 4410 provider agencies are on the verge of closing. We need to be funded in order to survive. Our programs serve the neediest children with the most significant developmental disabilities. Comprehensive services for these children will not be able to be incorporated into integrated concept programs. We know there will be a continued need for our placements. Children referred for 4410 placements come from all NYC communities. I represent the point of view from El Barrio/Harlem East and East Tremont, Bronx. We need you to assure 4410 placements available for these children.

Our families and their children suffered the most devastating effects during this pandemic. We offered educational, speech, occupational, physical therapies. Social emotional support and family counseling and links to community based resources. We offered remote only instruction, hybrid instruction and we are beginning to fully re-open for all in person learning come July offering full time, school based services. We were here as essential workers throughout the pandemic.

We are now faced with losing our teachers to programs that will pay them substantially more. We are a 12 month service and require our teachers to work with the most significantly disabled children for 12 months of the year. Our children have substantial behavioral, cognitive and motor disabilities. Many are on the autistic spectrum. Our teachers and therapists have to make decisions whether to leave our 4410 agencies to earn more and have summers off. They can do this while working with typically developing children. They will not be burdened by the hours of paperwork required by special education teachers. Most of our teachers do this work by staying longer hours at school and working nights and weekends. Many while attending their graduate programs and raising families. About half of our teachers are fully certified. We risk losing them as well. Help us keep them.

We know our teachers have the heart and passion to work with this population of children. We need to give them the financial support and recognition allowing them to continue. Many of our teachers are in graduate programs that require dual certificates and extensions to those certificates. This is a highly educated workforce. Most of our teachers are from the communities we serve. We have done our work to recruit a teacher base that looks like the children, families and communities we serve. Help us retain our teachers.

Due to the extensive educational requirements, our teachers have debt. Most function on college loans in spite of the many programs that offer scholarships and funds for educators. Tuition is very expensive. Fees, books and technology are also expensive. Not all of our teachers can get into the CUNY programs and are forced to attend a private college at a very high tuition rate. We have established donation and grant based funds to help these teachers.

The implications of NYC leaving the 4410 community based programs without additional funding will have a devastating effect not only on preschool children with disabilities but on entire communities.

The NYC Council has the power to help 4410 preschools. Please use your power! Help us maintain these essential 4410 preschool services to every child in every NYC community.

**New York City Council Committee on Finance**
**Executive Budget Hearing, May 25, 2021**
**Submitted by Melanie Kruvelis, Senior Manager of Policy and Advocacy, Young Invincibles**

My name is Melanie Kruvelis, and I am the Senior Manager of Policy and Advocacy at Young Invincibles. Young Invincibles is a non-profit dedicated to elevating young adults in the political process. I want to thank the New York City Council and the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to submit testimony on the FY22 Executive Budget, and its impact on young New Yorkers.

Young adults in New York have dealt with unimaginable loss and disruption over the last fourteen months of the COVID-19 pandemic: from getting sick and losing loved ones, to multiple semesters of distance learning, to increased isolation and mental health challenges, to even more financial insecurity than young New Yorkers already faced before COVID-19. Without significant and thoughtful investment in young people, the impact of these severe disruptions and challenges could be long-running. As we begin to emerge from this public health crisis, it could not be more urgent for the City to invest in institutions and programs that motivate and engage young people, and move young New Yorkers into stability — including institutions such as CUNY.

Yet, the Mayor's FY22 Executive Budget does not meaningfully invest in New York City's public colleges or its students — and in fact, includes dangerous cuts to programs needed more than ever. As an organization that represents young people across New York, we are particularly concerned by the following cuts and funding omissions in this year's Executive Budget:

a) **Cuts to academic support services that keep college students in school and on track to graduate — including CUNY ASAP, CUNY remediation programs, and College For All**: The Mayor's FY22 Executive Budget calls for a $10-million cut to the CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) program. CUNY ASAP is New York's true free college program, and provides students with tuition waivers, textbook support, individualizing counseling, and other support to encourage their persistence and college completion. Research shows that CUNY ASAP doubles graduation rates, and is a national model for supporting working-class students and students of color through college. While CUNY Chancellor Felix Matos Rodriguez has indicated in the press that the Mayor's $10-million cut for CUNY ASAP may be rejected in the enacted budget, the Council must ensure that funding for CUNY ASAP is fully restored in the FY22 budget. We also urge the Council to reject the Mayor's $8-million in cuts for "non-core" programs at CUNY, including CUNY's remediation programs. In recent years, CUNY has worked to revamp its remediation policies and practices to make students are placed into credit-bearing courses as early as

possible. Investing in these remediation programs means making sure college students are staying enrolled, and spending less time and money on their degree.
The FY22 Enacted Budget should restore the cuts to the remediation courses, and baseline $2 million for these programs, which would support approximately 9,000 CUNY students each year. We also urge the Council to restore the College Access for All program to $19.7 million to provide more support to high school seniors with college and career readiness/post-secondary planning, assistance with financial aid and college applications, and mock college and career interviews. Investing in College Access for All would also support middle school students' transition to high school and plan ahead for college. The FY21 City budget cut services for College Access for All, and combined high school and middle schools components of this program; another year of cuts would put students back even further on their postsecondary plans.

b) **No serious investment in meeting CUNY students' essential needs, including for food- and housing-insecure students**: Even before COVID-19, nearly half of CUNY undergraduates experienced food insecurity, while 14 percent experienced homelessness in a given year. An April 2020 survey from the CUNY School of Public Health shows that COVID-19 had exacerbated the financial insecurities faced by CUNY students — with serious implications for students' mental health. In fact, the same researchers found that the factors most strongly associated with depression and anxiety were financial stressors — from not being able to afford healthy food to being worried about being able to make rent this month. Lacking these basic needs undermines academic success, leaving many working-class students and students of color without the credential often needed to secure financial stability. Yet, despite the link between students' essential needs and their academic success, the Mayor's FY22 Executive Budget does not allocate funding for existing programs that help CUNY students access food and other supports — such as the Food Insecurity Program, a pilot program launched in 2019 that provides eligible CUNY students with cafeteria vouchers and checks to cover the cost of food and groceries. The City should increase its investment in the CUNY Food Insecurity Program from $1 million to $5 million, to help campuses distribute cafeteria vouchers or checks to eligible students. The City should also work with local grocery stores to provide grocery discounts for CUNY students with their campus ID. We also encourage the Council to increase funding for CUNY's Resource Centers (formerly known as Single Stop). These Resource Centers help CUNY students apply for housing, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), social services, while providing support with tax preparation, and referrals to legal services through the Legal Aid Society. Currently, these centers operate on CUNY's community college campuses, but only at one senior college: John Jay. Given both the high financial insecurity CUNY students are facing, and the recent

expansion of SNAP eligibility for more CUNY students, the City should invest in these resource centers, and make sure such a center exists on every CUNY campus.

c) **Underinvestment in paid work experiences for young people**: Research from the Economic Policy Institute shows that young people across the country have faced some of the steepest unemployment rates during the COVID-19 pandemic — with limited savings, credit, and access to public assistance that can help buoy New Yorkers through this crisis. Notably, the same researchers found the effects of the COVID-19 economic crisis could create "serious and long-term labor market repercussions" for young workers — unless equity-minded investments are made. We urge the City to make strategic investments in programs that provide young people with paid work experience that connect them with longer career planning and guidance. To support the next generation of workers, the City should baseline $20 million in the FY22 budget for Work, Learn, Grow (WLG), the City Council's year-round youth employment program launched in Fiscal Year 2016. WLG helps participants build work skills and aptitude by launching them into the diverse work opportunities available, through direct exposure and access to a paid workforce program. A permanent program should offer job experiences and training to 5,000 youth. Second, we urge the City to increase its investment to expand the Summer Youth Employment Program to a truly "universal" program with enough slots for all interested applications. Finally, we urge investment in the Job Training and Placement Initiative, which provides trainings, job placement, and small business technical assistance and address specific client needs such as English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, TASC preparation, computer literacy, and general work readiness preparation as well as provide industry specific trainings. In FY220, the Job Training and Placement Initiative faced over $2 million in cuts and similarly must be brought back to FY20 numbers at minimum, if not expanded to respond to the needs of New Yorkers locked out of the economy.

We urge the Council to reject the above cuts proposed by Mayor de Blasio, and make the critical investments needed to support New York's college students and young people out of this crisis.

Last, I want to address the federal stimulus aid currently being distributed to colleges across the country, including CUNY. While it is true that federal aid is coming into CUNY campuses, the incoming federal aid does not absolve the City from making much-needed investments into CUNY. The federal aid is temporary, and one-time aid cannot reverse decades of disinvestment in CUNY and its students. As state lawmakers propose transformative legislation like the New Deal for CUNY, which would restore tuition-free education for CUNY undergraduates, the City must consider its role in supporting this vision for a truly equitable public higher education system. The City already plays a key role in supporting the quarter-million students enrolled across the 25

CUNY campuses — from funding community colleges, to campus childcare, to its investment in nationally recognized programs that get students to graduate like no other. As state lawmakers reimagine Albany's commitment to CUNY students, so should City Hall.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. If you have questions about this testimony, please contact Melanie Kruvelis, Senior Manager of Policy and Advocacy, Young Invincibles: melanie.kruvelis@younginvincibles.org.

**New York City Council Committee on Finance**
**Executive Budget Hearing, May 25, 2021**
**Submitted by Lia Guzman Genao, Sophomore, John Jay College of Criminal Justice**

Good afternoon. My name is Lia Guzman Genao. I'm a sophomore at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Law & Society. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to be here and share my story.

I am here today to demand that the City Council increase investments across CUNY in this year's budget. This will allow students to not only perform better but also uplift their communities, especially after this pandemic. We must understand that CUNY students come with many layers of intersectionality. Many of our students are from low-income communities and are people of color. Our diverse community of student leaders must be further supported by the City.

As a CUNY student, I have had the opportunity to share a classroom with folks from all backgrounds. I have seen the passion and the drive students come into the classrooms with, but often their light is dimmed by financial burdens. CUNY students have long commutes, long hours in the classroom, and often, long shifts working outside their studies in order to afford their tuition. A lot of CUNY students must also go home and take care of their families, siblings and even their own children. Despite all of these responsibilities and struggles CUNY students face, they look forward to attending CUNY because of its affordability and accessibility to New Yorkers. They hope to use their education at CUNY's as a source of social mobility that seems so distant from their realities. We must work to assure that these hopes and dreams are followed through. If we want our students to thrive, we must create a truly accessible environment and campus. We can truly make this happen by providing tuition assistance and support programs that aid CUNY students.

We must start by restoring $10-million in CUNY ASAP funding. This program is New York's true free college program: it not only provides free tuition but it also provides textbook support and counseling. This year, the Mayor's Preliminary Budget called for a $10-million cut to CUNY ASAP, and this is unacceptable and must be rejected by the City Council. This program has been extremely successful, as it has doubled graduation rates for students. I believe that this program should not only be protected, but also extended so that every CUNY student is eligible for it.

Sadly, the ways in which financial burden affects CUNY students go past not being able to pay for tuition. An April 2020 survey from the CUNY School of Public Health found that nearly half of CUNY students worry about running out of food and affording groceries. Even before the pandemic, 48 percent of CUNY students faced some form of food insecurity. I believe that food is one of the most basic rights. So why are we okay with anyone, let alone CUNY students, to face

food insecurity? The only way that we can address hunger is to increase funding and accessibility of food programs in NYC. I'm here today to call on the City Council to increase its investments in the CUNY Food Insecurity program to $5 million. These programs provide students with cafeteria vouchers or paychecks to buy groceries. Increasing funding of this program would allow more CUNY students to be eligible, or to give students a bigger voucher each semester. This would help ensure that no CUNY student goes hungry, while allowing them to receive the education that is deserved.

College itself brings many stressors, and the mental health crisis among students is only gaining momentum as we speak. The COVID-19 pandemic has only deteriorated the mental state of many CUNY students. I have dealt with anxiety and depression on multiple occasions while in college. For a very long time, I debated whether to reach out for assistance on my campus, and I never felt comfortable enough to do it. I had heard many stories from other students of how inaccessible and overwhelming it was to even seek help. I felt that even reaching out for help would be a trigger for me, as no one should ever need to fight to receive counseling. This story is not unique to me: in fact, many CUNY students have reported that it took months for them to receive counseling at their schools. Accessibility matters. The City Council needs to actively work towards a system in which every student has access to mental health counseling and resources. The way to do that is by guaranteeing that there is at least one counselor per 1,000 students. We must also ensure that counselors at CUNY reflect CUNY's student body and their identities. We need counselors who truly understand the individual experiences of students. That means having more counselors of different communities who will effectively target traumas. If we want our students to thrive, we must recognize the intersectionalities of all these issues, and understand the complexities that students face daily.

With rising costs of tuition, our students just simply can't anymore. It is the moment for New York City to fully provide all the support we can to our students. No CUNY student should ever go hungry, no CUNY student should ever go without a home and no CUNY student should ever have to wait months to get simple mental counseling. Alleviating the financial burdens that many of our students face on a daily basis will give them a chance at a better quality of life. Every year we put money on a variety of programs and organizations that further hurt our communities, such as the NYPD. Can we finally start investing in those who have been historically left behind? Thank you for your time.

**New York City Council Committee on Finance**
**Executive Budget Hearing, May 25, 2021**
**Submitted by Nikaury Urena, Freshman, LaGuardia Community College**

My name is Nikaury Urena. I am a freshman at LaGuardia Community College, and I am majoring in Criminal Justice. I would first like to thank the NYC Council and the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to submit testimony and for letting our voices be heard.

I'm a first-generation low-income student and an immigrant. I had the fortune of being part of various programs provided by the city — programs that helped me navigate and gain knowledge that the adults in my life could not provide for me. When I was 16 years old I was part of the city's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), where I worked as a teacher's assistant with The Jewish Institute of Queens. At the age of 17, I also started an internship at Make The Road New York, which I was able to get in thanks to one of my teachers. Finally, when I entered college I started an internship with the CUNY Service Corps. I am thankful that I was part of these programs and that I was able to learn skills and develop my knowledge working with professional staff that provides the young generation with the tools and skills needed to work in a professional environment.

Even though I had the fortune to be part of these programs, it's not always easy for students to get placed into programs like these. When I was 18 years old, I tried applying for the SYEP and I was not accepted. Most of my high school friends were also denied. For the CUNY Service Corps, I had to wait around two or three months to be able to start the program, constantly going to meetings just to be able to get in. Programs like SYEP and the CUNY Service Corps provide meaningful work experience that helps students identify future career and education goals. But there are not enough slots to meet student demand. The City should invest in programs like SYEP and make sure that every eligible student is guaranteed a slot in the program.

I also believe that CUNY should invest more in resources like housing, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) enrollment services, social services, and increasing the number of mental health counselors, including hiring more diverse counselors on campus. CUNY is mostly composed of low-income students that face economic hardship on an everyday basis, and struggle to meet their essential needs. This pandemic has made life more difficult for every single student in the CUNY system. That's why the City needs to increase funding for CUNY's mental health counseling services, with a focus on bringing on more counselors of color. As students who face economic hardship, having a counselor who can help us navigate our issues and where we come from uplifts students, and makes it possible for us to succeed in college.

I once again want to thank the NYC Council and the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to submit testimony and for letting our voices be heard. I hope these issues could be addressed and solved for better opportunities for all CUNY students.

YOUTH JUSTICE NETWORK

**Testimony of**
**Youth Justice Network**

Before the Committee on Finance

May 20, 2020

**Re: Oversight: Executive Budget Hearings - Finance**

Chair Daniel Dromm:

On behalf of Youth Justice Network, I thank the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to address you. My name is Felicia Mosley Smith and I am the Associate Executive Director at Youth Justice Network. Our organization was founded over 30 years ago as Friends of Island Academy at the alternative high school on Rikers Island — known then as Island Academy. We recently changed our name to better reflect who we are and to disassociate from the legacy of Rikers Island.

Youth Justice Network was born out of cycles of recidivism and injustice experienced by thousands of youth of color cycling through poverty, violence, police contact and jail and, on a small scale, piloted adolescent reentry services on behalf of the youngest people in custody on Rikers.

I am honored to be one of many advocate organizations before you today to articulatethis budget's palpable threat to our youth member's safety and health during a time already filled with insecurity over the most basic human needs of food and shelter. . The way to keep our communities safe is by shifting the economic imbalance away from community control and toward community voice by making intentional financial choices to do so.

I came to the organization four years ago to help lead an innovative 4-year Pilot Demonstration which scaled our model of transitional and neighborhood-based post-release services. The Youth Reentry Network was an unprecedented youth justice reform initiative developed and launched in partnership with the City of New York in 2016, and implemented during a period of equally unprecedented changes in New York City's criminal and juvenile justice systems.

Over the course of the four-year Pilot, Youth Justice Network engaged 3600 young people in jail upon their admission, of whom 2,900 were discharged to neighborhoods across New York City. The power and significance of this advocacy lifeline is clear — nearly 60% of our young participants voluntarily (without a mandate from court) connected with their Advocate after their release from custody. This project included partnership with over 30 youth-focused community-embedded program providers who were working with young people on Rikers Island and at the Horizon Juvenile Center.

This pilot spawned innovation and informed the MOCJ's Post-Incarceration RFP. Despite all of this, our small army of neighborhood-based Youth Advocates between March 2020 and today was reduced from 22 Advocates City-wide to 5. On the eve of New York's pandemic lock-down, this affected about 500 young people City-wide who had recently returned from jail and it had an exponentially damaging impact on our youth members, for whom our Advocates are a critical lifeline. In particular, young people returned home from jail during the Covid-19 crisis to a landscape of extremely limited available resources.

We know that supportive services upon reentry are key to the growth and success of young people. This City's fabric is held together by an extraordinarily rich group of advocates, community-based

organizers, mentors, and nonprofits. Youth Justice Network and our 35 partner organizations alone represent about .0003% of the cost of the DOC's proposed 2022budget.[1] The way to make people and communities safer is to shift that equation.

Despite the current budget's purported goals, we know that hiring more Corrections Officers on staff won't make young people or communities safer, or provide them the services and tools they need to be successful once they leave jail – and thereby reduce the likelihood of recidivism The Eleventh Report of the Nunez Independent Monitor findings are additionally critical of DOC's continued inability to keep young people safe.

Currently, there are less than fifty 18-year-olds held on Rikers Island, a significant reduction over the last three years.[2] Alternative investments can and should be made, for example, in lieu of continued incarceration for this specific, vulnerable population. Investment could be made in supportive housing and related services, violence interrupters, summer jobs. We know that investment in long-term stable housing for young people leaving custody is critical. We know from our own data that 50% of our participants are homeless or housing unstable — and being homeless makes young people more likely to be arrested and incarcerated again, thanks to policies that criminalize homelessness.[3] Reducing DOC's staff to the ratio recommended by the Lippman Commission would save $1.2 billion this year alone, savings that could be used to invest in 800+ more units of supportive housing and related services.

[1] Based on YJN's annual budget vs. a 1.2 billion Correction budget
[2] Eleventh Report of the Nunez Independent Monitor
[3] https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html

MIA/FELICIA: FOR PURPOSES OF THE 2-MINUTE ORAL TESTIMONY, THE STUFF ABOVE ARE THE KEY HIGHLIGHTS – FOR WRITTEN SUBMISSION THIS MORNING, WE CAN INCLUDE THE REST, BELOW.

From 2012 to 2020, the average daily jail population in New York City fell 52%, but the Department of Correction's operating budget grew by 24%. Despite this fact, the rate of serious injury for violent incidents among people in custody rose by 284% from Fiscal 2019 to Fiscal 2020.[4] More officers, and more spending for DOC does not equal increased safety for the people who remain behind bars on Rikers Island.

As youth advocates, we build relationships of trust, honesty, and respect. From the moment participants meet with an Advocate, we remain in their corner, with no start and end dates— our average length of engagement with young people once they leave custody is 20 months. Additionally, 78% of young people we work with have had their sentences reduced or have been released from custody as a result of the efforts of our Miller Center for Special Mitigation.

Currently, there are less than fifty 18-year-olds held on Rikers Island, a significant reduction over the last three years.[5] Alternative investments can and should be made, for example, in lieu of continued incarceration for this specific, vulnerable population. Investment could be made in supportive housing and related services, violence interrupters, summer jobs. We know that investment in long-term stable housing for young people leaving custody is critical. We know from our own data that 50% of our participants are homeless or housing unstable — and being homeless makes young people more likely to be arrested and incarcerated again, thanks to policies that

[5]Eleventh Report of the Nunez Independent Monitor
[5]Eleventh Report of the Nunez Independent Monitor

criminalize homelessness.[6] Reducing DOC's staff to the ratio recommended by the Lippman Commission would save $1.2 billion this year alone, savings that could be used to invest in 800+ more units of supportive housing and related services.

Of the youth who have left Rikers Island during the pandemic, many of them have faced immense challenges in accessing the services, supports, and resources that are typically a life-line for youth trying to redirect their lives.

> We met JT over two years ago in custody. The prosecutors' initial plea offer for JT was a 7-year prison sentence. Friends' staff had been working with him since his initial admission, coming to know him and his family well. For 9 months, our mitigation team was undeterred by the prosecutor's initial offer, advocating continuously for JT's release. As a result, in the first week of March 2020, just after his transfer to Rikers Island on his 18th birthday, the presiding Judge was prepared to give JT the opportunity to go home and avoid a prison sentence. The court set an April 2020 date for what was to be JT's likely release. However, the Covid-19 crisis hit Rikers soon after JTs arrival, throwing the jail facility into chaos. School, programming, and visits all shut down, and the jail complex was closed to all non-DOC staff.
>
> We were extremely concerned about JTs health, as the virus spread rapidly through Rikers, and particularly after someone in in his housing area was diagnosed as positive for the virus. For weeks, Friends staff relayed information about the conditions for JT on Rikers

[6] https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html

to his court-appointed attorney who ultimately forwarded our information via email to the court and district attorney. That same day, after reading real time updates and because of our continued engagement with him in the neighborhood if discharged, the judge agreed to JT's release.

JT remains determined to continue on a positive track, and we have connected him to a credible messenger mentor in his neighborhood and will arrange for him to take his HSE exam once testing resumes. However, we also know that if he does not continue to have support in these areas from his Advocate, his likelihood of turning to alternate, negative routes of support could increase. We also know that the barriers that youth faced prior to Covid-19 are only exacerbated by the pandemic and the connections and ability to help navigate post Covid-19 systems will be lost if funding to our program and programs like ours continues to be dis-invested in.

We hope that our experiences working with a population at high risk of victimization and incarceration have helped to paint a picture of how important continued funding is for community security and safety - one rooted in and defined by the communities you serve. The mentorship, relentless commitment, and resources for which young people depend on from Youth Justice Network and our partners is essential, and it is on behalf of these vulnerable youth that we implore the City to continue to make investments in positive opportunities for youth.

youthrepresent
JUSTICE FROM COURTROOM TO COMMUNITY

**New York City Council**
**Finance Committee**
**FY 2022 Executive Budget Hearing – Public Testimony**
**Written Comments of Michael Pope, Executive Director, Youth Represent**
**May 25, 2021**

Youth Represent is dedicated to improving the lives and futures of young people affected by the criminal legal system. When the justice system creates barriers to success for youth, we use the law to help them leave the stigma of a criminal record behind. We provide criminal and civil reentry legal representation to young people age 24 and under, assisting them with everything from rap sheet review to school suspensions to employment discrimination and any other legal needs they identify. We also engage in policy advocacy and youth leadership development through our Youth Speakers Institute. Our interdisciplinary approach allows us to understand our clients' legal and practical challenges so we can effectively represent them from courtroom to community.

Thank you to Speaker Johnson, Council members and staff for the opportunity to provide testimony on Youth Represent's services and the 2022 budget.

**About Youth Represent**

As we testified before the Criminal Justice Committee during the Preliminary Budget Hearings in March, young people who have had contact with the criminal legal system can face severe and lasting consequences. Employers, landlords, and colleges run criminal background checks, and a conviction—even from one's teenage years—can be used as a reason to deny someone a job, a home, or an education. Criminal system involvement can also harm a young parent's ability to reconnect with their family and can interfere with custody or visitation rights.

**With critical support from the New York City Council through the Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative**, Youth Represent helps young people overcome these barriers by providing reentry legal services for young people in their own communities.

Raise the Age legislation passed by the legislature in 2017 extended protections to most 16- and 17-year olds by ensuring that that, if arrested, their cases would be heard in the family court, where cases are confidential and records are sealed from the public. **But Raise the Age did not extend any protections to youth and emerging adults once they have turned 18.** Each year, tens of thousands of young people 18-25 are arrested and prosecuted in adult court and exposed to lifelong criminal records.

**FY 2022 Funding Request**

Youth Represent is requesting a restoration of $75,000 in funding under the Citywide Innovative Criminal Justice Initiative and an enhancement of $10,000 to be allocated directly into our Emergency Client fund, 100% of which will be distributed to our clients.

- The request to restore $75,000 is critical to ensure we can continue providing legal support for young people during this Crisis. Through criminal records support, unemployment insurance support, safe working conditions cases, and combatting employment discrimination, this work is vital. Our work is more important now given that, during this crisis, the disproportionate harm continues to impact the youth of color that we serve.

- The $10,000 enhancement request will go directly into our Emergency Client fund. This funding will be given back into the hands of our clients at a rate of 100%. The emergency fund is allocated by our Staff closest to the emergency needs of the youth we serve. We created this fund when Covid first hit and it has been instrumental in solving emergency needs for our clients: everything from paying for cabs to and from the hospital for a pregnant client to covering the cost of food for a client whose unemployment insurance payments were delayed. The fund is now running low and I deeply hope Council will refill this essential pool of funding.

**Who We Serve**

The young people we serve have been some of the **hardest hit by the Covid crisis**. Our clients are overwhelmingly youth of color, and all are low-income. A quarter live in subsidized housing and 16% live in shelters or supportive housing. They have faced economic hardship, the stress of lockdown, the difficulty of remote learning, and severely disproportionate rates of infection and loss of life. Some are navigating pregnancy and parenting young children during the pandemic. Many have faced pressure to **continue working in unsafe condition**s, putting them, their families, and everyone they interact with at risk. These pressures are exacerbated now that CDC guidelines have relaxed and New York is "reopening." Finally, disruptions in the labor market increase the likelihood of **discrimination** against system-involved youth.

**How We've Responded to the Covid-19 Crisis**

As the pandemic wore on over the past year, Youth Represent used technology to continue to provide robust services while working remotely. We launched a **chatbot** to allow young people to start the intake process just by visiting our website; started a citywide **legal hotline** in collaboration with Community Service Society; and have relied on word of mouth and relationships with partner organizations to spread the word about our services to young people who are disconnected from traditional service providers. We also shifted resources to respond to immediate client needs and launched an **emergency fund** that has covered expenses ranging from groceries to cleaning supplies to cab rides so a pregnant client could travel safely to prenatal appointments.

**City Council Criminal Justice Programs Initiative Support**

With the renewed and continued support from the Council, since July of 2019 we have provided direct legal representation to **181 young people**, opening 139 of reentry cases. We also provided 51 Know Your Rights virtual workshops to 357 participants, covering topics such as one's rights and responsibilities when stopped by a police officer and conducting a job search with a criminal history. We could not do this work without the support of the Council and hope you will renew this funding in FY2022 so we can continue these critical services for youth.

City Council funding this initiative allows us to **leverage other public and private revenue** to achieve pivotal outcomes for youth. In fact, Council funding this year has proven more critical than ever before, as many of our nonprofit partner organizations have either closed or have been forced to slash their budgets, eliminating subcontracts for supplemental services like those provided by Youth Represent. Throughout the past year, Youth Represent has continued to provide critical, client-centered support to young people facing legal issues:

*Criminal / Family Court – Client Story*

> Our partners at The Door recently connected us with "Walter," a Spanish-speaking Legal Permanent Resident. When Walter discovered that police were looking to question him, he wanted to surrender immediately as the allegations were baseless and false. We advised Walter of the potential repercussions of an arrest, especially in light of his immigration status. Walter's main concern, though, was losing his job and being unable to provide for his child. Youth Represent was able to invoke Walter's rights, arrange with the detective a later date for the surrender, and provide his employer advance notice of his absence from work. We gathered letters of support ahead of Walter's appearance for submission to the judge. He was subsequently released on his own recognizance under supervised release and kept his job.

*Employment – Client Story*

> When we met "Justin" and ran his criminal history, we found that he had just been granted an Adjournment in Contemplation of Dismissal (ACD), which could appear as an open arrest for six months. But Justin was protected by a law passed by this legislature in 2019 that bars employers from denying a job on the basis of a pending ACD. We conducted legal research to confirm that this law would apply to FDIC-regulated institutions, and assured Justin he would be legally eligible for the position in his chosen career track of Financial Operations. When Justin was selected for a position at a major bank, the bank discovered his open arrest and asked him for information about it. We provided Justin with this information and explained the change in New York law that prohibited the bank from taking adverse action against him. As a result, Justin was able to begin working right away. Our representation enabled us to resolve this matter without resorting to litigation and to help Justin reach his career goal of starting a job at a financial institution.

For the FY 2022 budget, we seek a restoration of our $75,000 in funding under the Citywide Innovate Criminal Justice Initiative for these critical legal services for youth. We are also requesting an enhancement of $10,000 in new funding to go **directly** into our Emergency Fund. Over the past year the fund has disbursed more than $15,000 to over 40 young people to respond to emergencies: everything from purchasing groceries and baby formula to paying for car rides to doctor appoints. **100% of our Emergency Funds** are distributed to young people. Their needs persist as the Covid crisis slowly winds down but has not ended. We hope you will help us continue to provide this important lifeline of funds.

**Conclusion**

The Covid crisis has amplified the injustices that Youth Represent fights every single day. For the past year, we **refused to turn our backs** on those feeling the greatest impact from the crisis. We found innovative ways to deliver our core legal services model and expanded our services to meet the needs of the Black and Latinx youth we serve. We also stood with young people, colleagues, community partners, Council Members, and the broader community to demand justice: decarceration, funding for critical services, and access to safe and healthy conditions for living and working.

We **thank the Council** for your FY21 support and for championing young people affected by the criminal legal system. As this crisis unfolds, and we slowly return to some form of normalcy, we will continue to adapt our support to meet young people's needs. Our response will continue to change, but what won't change is our commitment to delivering for young system-involved New Yorkers.

**Testimony for the New York City Council Committee on Finance**

*May 25th, 2021*

Good Morning Council Members. My name is Hollisha Liverpool and I am the Young Women's Advisory Council Program Manager at Girls for Gender Equity (GGE).

Today, I represent the Young Women's Advisory Council at Girls for Gender Equity. We are part of the Young Women's Initiative (YWI) that was launched by Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and the New York City Council to identify the gaps in services for young women ages 12-24, with a focus on cis and trans women and girls of color and gender non conforming/ non-binary youth of color. YWI brings together leaders and organizers, with the goal of crafting policy recommendations that address racial, gender and other disparities. GGE is committed to the wellbeing and safety of cis and trans girls of color and gender non-conforming/non-binary youth of color.

I am here today to talk about the importance of codifying funding for YWI. YWI currently provides funding for over 30 organizations across 8 different initiatives. These organizations focus on providing young people with provider training, patient counseling and care, empowering and preventive measures to deal with all forms of violence, bystander intervention programs,, services specifically for immigrant survivors of domestic violence, paid internships for students enrolled in DOE Career and Technical Education Programs and training in leadership around arts, college and career readiness, culture, gender studies, health and wellness, and social activism. YWI is crucial in meeting the needs of the most marginalized and underserved young women throughout NYC.

The Council's support helps organizations like ours reach young women where they are - even during this unprecedented time, when reaching them where they are means Zoom. Young women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, often adding caring for family members and working long hours (contributing to diminished household income) to the challenges shared by all school- aged youth: staying engaged with classwork online while navigating chaotic and ever-changing expectations and uncertainty.

An alumni from GGE's Young Women's Advisory Council shared:

> The Young Women's Advisory Council was definitely one of the most impactful programs I have ever participated in. I have worked in social justice spaces before, but

the environment that was cultivated by Girls For Gender Equity was truly unique. From the breakdown of levels of government to building and researching legislation that impacts Black and Brown girls to creating sustainable organizing, YWAC facilitators made reimagining systems seem like something we could accomplish. Not only did I receive the tools and vocabulary needed to build movements, but I received a family of people who are supportive, loving and dedicated to seeing the liberation of marginalized young people.

It is clear to see that young people need and desire organizations that are seeking their best interest and that is why it is extremely important to codify funding for YWI. Codifying funding will ensure that these organizations can continue to do amazing work and provide the necessary support that our NYC young girls need. The impact that these organizations have on young women across New York City is undeniable. Now more than ever young women need support from the community based organizations they have established relationships with.

Thank you for your time.