



Testimony of

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Before the
New York City Council
Education Committee

Regarding the New York City
Preliminary Plan Budget Proposals for FY12

April 8, 2011

My name is Louise Feld and I am the Policy Associate for Education, Food and Economic Security at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC). CCC is a 67-year old privately supported, independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring New York City's children are healthy, housed, educated and safe. I would like to thank Chairman Recchia, Chairman Jackson and the members of the City Council Finance and Education Committees for holding this hearing on the City's Preliminary Budget for City Fiscal Year 2012 (CFY12).

While we appreciate the negative impact that the cost shifts to localities included in the State's adopted budget will have on the City's budget, we believe that it is unacceptable for the city's children to continue to bear a disproportionate burden of balancing the City's budget, particularly in light of the city's improved revenue forecast for CFY12 (an additional \$1.1 billion projected for CFY12).

Before discussing the details of the Preliminary Budget for CFY12, it is important to remember that this Financial Plan represents the 10th round of budget cuts. New York City's children have already lost thousands of slots in child care centers, after school programs, school-based dental clinics, mental health programs, and the Summer Youth Employment Program. In addition, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) has repeatedly been held to a higher budget cutting standard than any of the uniform services, despite being the City's emergency responder for children.

Turning specifically to education, we appreciate the Mayor's proposal to dedicate \$1.86 billion of additional City tax levy funds to education. This proposal demonstrates a commitment to financially supporting our City's public schools. Further, these City funds are critical and necessary in light of both the adoption of the State Budget, which cuts \$1.3 billion in School Aid funding for New York State, and the expiration of the time-limited Federal funding that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided to education.

CCC is, however, concerned about the Mayor's assertion that over 4000 teachers must be laid off in CFY12 because of the fiscal crisis and the State's failure to provide adequate funding for public schools in its recently-adopted budget. This astounding number of potential lay-offs will prove devastating for New York City school children, many of whom are already forced to study in under-resourced and over-crowded classrooms. CCC sincerely hopes that the State, the Mayor, and the United Federation of Teachers can move swiftly to reach an agreement about the "Last In, First Out" lay-off rule, and work to prevent teacher lay-offs in general, so that the City can ultimately decrease class sizes.

CCC also asks the Mayor and the City Council to acknowledge, and consider in their decision-making, that as critical as high quality schools and teachers are, they alone do not guarantee a child's academic success. Our schools do not operate in a vacuum, but rather function best when children are provided with opportunities for school readiness and for after-school enrichment. CCC urges lawmakers, when determining the budget for CFY12, to break away from traditional approaches that view early childhood, K-12 education, and after-school as separate entities, and instead recognize that each of these areas make significant, and connected, contributions to a child's overall academic achievement.

Given this correlation, CCC was incredibly dismayed when the City sent the working parents of almost 17,000 children letters informing them that they will no longer have a child care subsidy by September 1st, 2011. Child care is not just an economic engine that enables parents to continue participating in the workforce, but also ensures that children are learning and beginning

to prepare for their entrance into kindergarten. The planned termination of these child care subsidies certainly would deny so many children the opportunity to start their K-12 careers on an even playing field. The success of the New York City public education system and its students therefore hinges on the availability of quality child care for all children.

Similarly, youth services that provide educational and recreational programming beyond the school day must also be protected. Unfortunately, the Mayor's Preliminary Plan proposes significant cuts to a number of vital youth programs that play a critical role in children's emotional and social growth, and in family and community efforts to keep children learning and safe. For example, if the Mayor's Preliminary Plan for CFY12 is adopted, Out-of-School Time, which provides after-school academic, athletic, and recreation programming for elementary, middle, and high school students, will suffer a total loss of \$15.5 million in City funds (\$6.05 million from the Mayor's proposed cut to OST Option I, \$5.95 million in one-year City Council Restoration funds from CFY11 to OST Option I, and \$3.05 million in one-year City Council Restoration funds from CFY11 to OST Option II). In addition, 66 of New York City's Beacon Centers, which provide a broad array of support services to youth and their families, will face a \$2.63 million – or 10% – reduction to their funding, despite already operating on a shoestring budget. We urge the Council to oppose cuts to these, and all other youth programs, as such services provide academic supports and enrichment activities essential to children's success in school.

In sum, while we appreciate the City's effort to replace the \$1.86 billion loss of state and federal funds with city tax levy for the Department of Education, we urge the City not to move forward with massive teacher layoffs that will both trigger an increase in class size and have a profoundly negative impact on the quality of education that New York City public school students receive. Further, we ask that the City protect early childhood and youth development programs, both of which, when combined with a quality K-12 education, contribute to the overall academic success of New York City's children.

Finding the revenue needed to restore detrimental cuts will require a balanced approach. CCC suggests that all revenue producing options must be on the table, including but not limited to, sin taxes, income taxes, and pension reform.

We understand that the city deficit is so significant that some budget reductions will be made. As you work with the Mayor and fellow Council members on the budget, we urge you to be strategic and deliberate. Funding for cost-effective programs and services that prevent child abuse, keep children safe, ensure children are housed, fed and clothed, and healthy, and funding that goes directly to classrooms must be preserved. It is critical that the actions the City Council takes with the Mayor protect the City's ability to ensure that our children remain healthy, housed, educated and safe.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Attached is a chart detailing the full \$161 million cuts to children's services, as well as the elimination of 17,000 child care subsidies and the Advantage Program.