



Testimony of

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Oversight - Overview of the Out-of-School Time Request for Proposals.

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Good morning. My name is Moira Flavin and I am the Policy Associate for Early Childhood Education, Education and Youth Services at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC). CCC is a 68-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe. I would like to thank Chair Fidler, as well as the members of the Youth Services Committee, for holding today's hearing to explore the impacts of the Department of Youth and Community Development's Out-of-School-Time (OST) RFP on the after-school system in New York City.

CCC has long advocated for high quality after-school services for all of New York City's children and youth. These OST programs could provide youth with academic enrichment; social, emotional, and leadership development opportunities; and a safe place to be when the school day ends and their parents are at work. Since the program's inception in 2005, CCC has supported the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)'s efforts to create the OST program and we have urged the City to make the program available to more children.

In October 2011, DYCD released an RFP for new OST contracts. At that time, the anticipated funding was \$75 million, which represented a significant cut to the OST system, from its current funding level of \$90 million. In addition, the November Financial Plan further cut the funding level in the RFP to \$69 million, reducing the services available to youth citywide by another 3,000 slots. At its height, OST served 85,000 young people, but the new RFP would only serve 26,000-29,000 children, when the 3,000 slot reduction in the November Plan is included.

While CCC supports DYCD's programmatic vision for OST as it is outlined in the new RFP, we have significant concerns about the impact its implementation will have on New York City's children and their families, including the significantly diminished capacity, the ability to serve children whose parents need OST so that they can work, and the providers' abilities to provide the services required at the rate included in the RFP.

CCC supports the RFP's focus on quality services to enrich children's academics and provide them with leadership and youth development opportunities. We also appreciate the RFP's promotion of project-based learning approaches for middle school students; the inclusion of activities to promote physical fitness and healthy living; the requirement for year-round programming as a strategy to prevent summer learning loss and to help close the achievement gap, and the focus on parent engagement and partnerships with schools and other stakeholders.

On the other hand, we are very concerned about the amount of funding provided to support the RFP. In addition to the significant cut in capacity, pursuant to the RFP, OST programs will be required to provide enhanced academic and support activities without sufficient funding per participant. Simply put, OST programs are being asked to do more with less for those children who will still be able to participate in OST services. Furthermore, programs will operate for fewer hours during the school year and during the summer months and will be open on fewer school-closing days. Therefore, participants and their families will be forced to make other arrangements for that time, which will place undue hardship on working parents who rely on OST programming for elementary and middle school-age children.

In addition to the reduction in services and capacity, the new OST RFP also changes where OST programs will be located. First, it is important to note that while the 2005 RFP and current OST system provided for OST for high school students, the new RFP no longer offers the program to high school students. Second, the RFP eliminates the OST Option II program, which currently is a public/private match OST program initiated by DYCD, but currently supported by City Council Funds. In addition, the new RFP indicates that DYCD has categorized zip codes as targeted and non-targeted, and they will be making contract award decisions such that each borough will have 70% of their funding for targeted zip codes and 30% of the funding for non-targeted zip codes.

While CCC supports aligning services with communities of greatest need, we are concerned that the tremendous decrease in system-wide capacity will leave the non-targeted zip codes with insufficient capacity to meet the needs of families for whom OST is also a critical support.

CCC is also concerned about DYCD's decision to prohibit the co-location of OST programs with Beacon or Cornerstone programs. Pursuant to the RFP, providers will no longer be allowed to bid for programs in sites already operating NYCHA Cornerstone or Beacon programs. Since many providers and families view OST and Beacon/NYCHA Cornerstone programs as a continuum, where the latter programs serve older children, this new prohibition would disrupt services for families with children of different ages or with different needs. In addition, it would prevent many long-time OST providers from being able to continue to provide OST at currently operating sites.

Furthermore, DYCD is slated to release an RFP for the Beacon programs in 2012, with an anticipated contract starting date of September 1, 2013. The recently released November Financial Plan would close seven of the city-funded Beacons as of June 30, 2012. DYCD plans to notify the providers of the projected closures at some point in January 2012, likely after the OST proposal deadline of January 6, 2012. Thus, current Beacon providers who receive notification that their programs are among the seven slated to close June 30, 2012 will have lost the opportunity to apply for OST contracts. These cuts will adversely affect families and will potentially push qualified service providers out of the after-school system.

Finally, CCC is also concerned about the possibility that OST providers will at some point be required to pay DOE school opening fees. The new OST RFP states, "It is anticipated that programs in DOE school sites will not be charged school opening fees." At the bidders' conference on November 15, 2011, the DOE representative stated that DOE would pay the fees for programs in DOE schools from 3-6pm. CCC is hopeful that DOE will keep its word and pay the fees, but there is no guarantee. This issue has long worried providers, given that DOE could change their mind as the RFP is currently written, DYCD would not provide additional financial assistance to cover the cost of the fees. In addition, even if DOE covers the costs from 3PM-6PM, many providers operate later than 6pm, on weekends and/or during the summer, and would likely be unable to remain in schools if DOE or DYCD did not cover the cost of the fees.

In CCC's view, the cuts to the Out-of-School Time system created by the new RFP and the November Financial Plan represent the further erosion of the after-school system in New York City. In fact, it comes on top of the significant cuts DYCD has made, and continues to make to

the City's after school services. While CCC is supportive of the model outlined in the new RFP, we are very concerned about the level of funding associated with it and thus the number of children who will have access to quality programs. These cuts are poised to take effect in a very difficult economic climate, in which other valuable services for children and families, including but not limited to, ACS school age vouchers, are also at risk.

After-school programs provide youth academic enrichment; social, emotional, and leadership development opportunities; and safe places to go when school is not in session. Such programs provide vital supports to families and help working parents continue working. DYCD's OST system has already been cut from 85,000 slots at its inception to 50,000 currently, and is poised to serve only 29,000 children when the new contracts take effect in September 2012. CCC urges the City to protect the after-school system and continue to invest in programs that keep children safe after school and provide them with enrichment opportunities.

In closing, a \$1 investment in after-school programs can save participants and taxpayers \$3, not including the cost savings from a demonstrated reduction in crime.¹ Youth services provide critical venues for students to participate in academic enrichment programs, to develop and practice skills that support leadership and civic engagement, and to explore their creativity. Research has demonstrated that participants in quality after-school programs had a graduation rate of 63%, compared to 42% for non-participants.² Furthermore, youth are at greatest risk for delinquency between the hours of 3-6pm³ and every \$1 invested in youth services saves \$40 in future criminal justice costs.⁴ This is especially relevant given the City's focus on reducing juvenile justice placements. Moreover, youth who participate in quality summer programming are less likely to suffer from "summer learning loss," which is a major contributor to the achievement gap. Lastly, youth services provide parents with more options in terms of their work schedules. Thus, investments in youth services support the youth participants, their families, communities and taxpayers. For all these reasons, CCC urges the City to protect and invest in services that support the education and healthy development of all youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

¹ Latimore, C.B., Milhalic, S.F., Grotzpetter, J.K., & Taggart, R. (1998). *The Quantum Opportunities Program*. In D.S Elliot.

² (Series Ed). *Blueprints for violence prevention: Book four*. Boulder, CO. Center for the Study of Prevention of Violence.

³ Fight Crime Invest in Kids. *New York City's Out-of-School Time Choice: The Prime Time for Crime or Youth Enrichment and Achievement*, 2007. Available online:

<http://www.fightcrime.org/sites/default/files/reports/NYC%20AS%202%20pager.pdf>

⁴ Keeping Track 2010 Edition. Citizens' Committee for Children.