Testimony of

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Finance and Youth Services Committees

Regarding the
New York City
Fiscal Year 2016 Preliminary Budget

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Good afternoon. My name is Elizabeth Hoffman and I am the Policy Associate for Housing and Homelessness at Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York, Inc. (CCC). CCC is a 71-year-old, privately supported, independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe. I would like to thank Chairs Ferreras and Eugene, as well as the members of the City Council Committees on Finance and Education for holding today’s hearing regarding the City’s Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2016.

The Preliminary Budget takes important steps to address income inequality and improve child safety and well-being in New York City. Mayor de Blasio made clear at the budget briefing that the Preliminary Budget is just a first step towards developing the Fiscal Year 2016 budget and that there is a great deal more to look at and evaluate as we move towards the Executive Budget in April. This is good news because there are a number of areas that must be addressed in Fiscal Year 2016 in order to improve outcomes for New York’s children and families.

Specifically, we look forward to an Executive Budget that makes the investments needed to: improve access to high quality early childhood education and after-school services; bring school breakfast to all classrooms and universal lunch programs to all schools; support primary preventive services that strengthen families and prevent abuse and neglect; and expand access to children’s health and mental health services in schools and communities.

This testimony focuses on the new investments in the Preliminary Budget related to youth services in the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). The testimony highlights the Preliminary Budget proposals we support, the initiatives we hope to see restored and baselined, as well as the additional programs and investments we hope to see in the Executive Budget. We urge the City Council to focus on the areas identified in this testimony as you develop your priorities and that you also urge the Administration to use the Fiscal Year 2016 Budget to make NYC a better place to be a child.

**CCC Supports the Preliminary Budget Proposals That Will Strengthen, Maintain and Expand Access to Youth Services**

CCC appreciates all of the resources and attention the de Blasio Administration and DYCD have committed to strengthening and expanding youth services during the first year of the Administration. After many years of fighting with the City Council to save the same after-school slots from being cut, and losing ground year after year, it has been very gratifying to see youth services expand. The middle school after-school expansion (referred to as SONYC) has ensured thousands of NYC middle school students have had access to after-school programs, enabling them to be meaningfully engaged after school while their parents are able to work.

CCC is incredibly supportive of the Preliminary Budget proposal to add $190 million for over 100,000 middle school students to have access to after-school programs in the second wave of expansion next year. We, like the City Council and Mayor’s office, have been advocating to ensure this commitment of resources is maintained in the State Budget that is currently being negotiated.
CCC also supports the Preliminary Budget proposal to add $17.6 million to maintain summer programming for 22,000 elementary school students. As the City Council is aware, the Bloomberg Administration planned to cut 30,000 after-school slots but the City Council was able to save their funding. The middle school seats that had been supported by the City Council are not part of the SONYC program. The elementary school seats restored by the City Council and then baselined, formerly referred to as OST but now called COMPASS, are part of the current COMPASS RFP (DYCD has not yet selected the awardees). This RFP, however, only had enough funding for the school year for the 22,000 elementary school students. CCC is very grateful that the Administration is proposing to add the funding for the summer portion of the slot. This is incredibly important for parents, providers and children and adding the funding now enables parents and providers to be able to plan for the summer.

Finally, CCC also supports the Preliminary Budget proposal to add $3.4 million to the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) to maintain the same number of SYEP slots as last summer at the higher minimum wage that came into effect this past January. As discussed later in this testimony, CCC believes that we need to significantly increase the number of youth who get summer jobs through SYEP, so it was very important that the Preliminary Budget ensures that we are at least able to serve the same number of youth this summer.

**CCC Urges the Administration to Restore and Baseline City Council Initiatives Related to Youth Services**

CCC appreciates the City Council’s long-standing commitment to investing critical resources into the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) to both maintain and strengthen the programming available to the City’s youth. We will be urging the Administration to restore and baseline the initiatives supported by the City Council in Fiscal Year 2015 and we hope the City Council will do so as well. Specifically, these are:

- $7.1 million for Cultural After-School Adventure (CASA)
- $400,000 for Big Brothers Big Sisters
- $15.2 million for 10,640 Summer Youth Employment Program Slots (SYEP)
- $800,000 for the New York Junior Tennis League
- $750,000 for NYC Digital Inclusion and Literacy Initiative to address disparities in internet access
- $1 million for Sports and Arts in School Foundation
- $3 million for The After School Corporation (TASC)
- $350,000 for the YMCA After-School Program
- $2.1 million for NYC Youth Build
CCC Urges the Administration to Make Additional Investments to Strengthen Youth Services

1) After-School Programs
While CCC applauds the middle school after-school expansion, there is much more that the City must do to protect current capacity for elementary and high school students, expand capacity for elementary and high school students and strengthen the overall system.

Youth are at greatest risk for delinquency between the hours of 3-6pm and every $1 invested in youth services saves $3 in savings for participants and taxpayers. After-school programs enable parents to work while their children are both safe and receiving stimulating, nurturing and developmentally appropriate care. These programs have clearly demonstrated their benefits for children, families, and communities.

New York City’s after-school programming includes a mix of academic supports, sports, youth development, and recreation. After-school programs keep elementary, middle and high school students engaged in a wide array of enriching and positive activities during after-school, holiday and summer hours. The largest City-funded after-school program was previously referred to as Out-of-School-Time (OST). This program has been renamed COMPASS (Comprehensive After-School System). The middle school component of COMPASS is referred to as SONYC (School’s Out NYC). (Thus SONYC is a subset of COMPASS and all refer to the program previously called OST.) The investment in middle-school after-school (SONYC) led to the increase in COMPASS/OST from 44,000 last year to 78,000 this school year.

Unfortunately, while the administration is poised to implement the second wave of the middle-school after-school expansion and serve over 100,000 middle school students, we are about to lose capacity for elementary and middle school students. To prevent the loss of capacity and to serve the same number of children currently served, the following IMMEDIATE NEEDS must be funded in the FY16 Executive Budget:

- **$7.7 million for the 2,300 elementary school after-school slots** that are lost by increasing the rate of the slots previously funded by the City Council to the OST/COMPASS rate. By using the regular COMPASS (previously known as OST) elementary school rate but the same amount of funding, the system is slated to lose 2,300 slots.

- **$5.9 million for the 17 sites (serving 1,882 children)** currently funded by DOE but slated to be eliminated when the contracts end on 6/30/15. These 17 sites are:
  1) Westhab at Hyde Leadership Charter School in the Bronx (123 children) (CM Arroyo)

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2) Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation at East New York Elementary School of Excellence in Brooklyn (120 children) (CM Barron)

3) New York Junior Tennis League at The Fresh Creek School in Brooklyn (120 children) (CM Barron)

4) New York Junior Tennis League at PS 148 in Queens (120 children) (CM Dromm)

5) Sports and Arts in School Foundation at PS 376 in Brooklyn (120 children) (CM Espinal)

6) Child Development Center of the Mosholu Montefiore at PS 41 in the Bronx (120 children) (CM King)

7) Queens Community House at PS 117 in Queens (81 children) (CM Lancman)

8) NY Mission Society at PS 192 in Manhattan (116 children (CM Levine)

9) Union Settlement at PS 112 in Manhattan (120 children) (Speaker Mark-Viverito)

10) Police Athletic League at PS 48 in Staten Island (93 children) (CM Matteo)

11) New York Junior Tennis League at PS 12 in Brooklyn (95 children) (CM Mealy)

12) Brooklyn Chinese American Association at PS69 in Brooklyn (84 children) (CM Menchaca)

13) SCO Family of Services at PS 94 in Brooklyn (120 children) (CM Menchaca)

14) YMCA of Greater New York/Bronx at PS 106 in the Bronx (96 children) (CM Palma)

15) The Child Center of New York at PS 273 in Queens (120 children) (CM Ulrich)

16) Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation at PS 121 in the Bronx (120 children) (CM Vacca)

17) The Child Center of New York at PS 96 in Queens (114 children) (CM Wills)

In addition, there are other critical steps that the Administration must make in the Executive Budget, which we urge the City Council to support:

- **Increase the rate for elementary after-school (COMPASS) programs.** As part of the middle school expansion, the City rightly increased the rate for middle school programming. Despite the fact that providing after-school programs to elementary school students is more expensive (due to student/teacher ratios and programming costs), the middle school rate is now higher than the elementary school rate.

- **Increase the rate for Beacons.** Beacon Centers are nationally recognized youth development programs that, through collaborations between schools and community-based organizations, provide a broad range of support services to youth and their families. Beacons operate in the afternoons/evenings, on weekends, during school holidays and vacation periods, and during the summer. These school-based community centers offer academic and recreation opportunities for youth and other supportive services to families. Each of the City’s 80 Beacons (66 are City-funded) serves approximately 800-1200 children in after-school programs. While the Beacons are essentially the original community school model that is now being expanded, the Beacons are severely underfunded at $320,000-$350,000 per Beacon.
• **Ensure NYCHA Cornerstone Programs are Preserved:** The Preliminary Budget did not include funding to maintain the 45 new NYCHA Cornerstone programs added this past year. We understand this will be included in the Executive Budget and we look forward to seeing its inclusion.

• **Increase the capacity to serve more elementary and high school students.**

2) **Runaway and Homeless Youth Services**

Runaway and homeless youth (RHY) are some of the most vulnerable youth in New York City. Despite the de Blasio Administration’s investment of $3.4 million to create 100 new shelter beds this past fiscal year, the opening of a 24-hour drop-in center, and the efforts of DYCD to expand services for RHY, we believe more needs to be done for these young people in the Executive Budget. Specifically CCC urges the Administration to add funding for an additional 100 new beds, as well as the services to prevent youth homelessness and the services youth need when they enter the RHY system.

Homelessness in and of itself is traumatic for young people and research has shown that homeless youth experience high rates of violence, sexual assault, illness, and behavioral disorders.\(^3\) Homeless youth may also engage in survival sex and drug use as a way to cope with being homeless.\(^4\) Thus, there are many issues a homeless youth is facing in addition to needing a stable place to live.

In New York City, we have estimated that there are over 3,800 youth under 24 who are homeless and unsheltered and several thousand more in the City’s various shelter systems. This estimate is based on a 2008 study conducted by the Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services with the assistance of Columbia University. More recently, as a supplement to the official HOPE Count, the Youth Count has been conducted since January 2013. CCC is very appreciative of DYCD’s effort to count and document the number of runaway and homeless youth however, this count has not yet accurately captured the number of all homeless youth.

In 2008, according to the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, shelters documented 573 instances where young people were turned away for services because there were not enough beds. By 2012, the most recent year data was available, this number jumped to 5,041 instances.\(^5\) Without shelter beds, runaway and homeless youth must often sleep on the streets or in unsafe situations, which puts them at risk of poor mental and physical health, violence, sexual exploitation and/or human trafficking. For example, a study by Covenant House and Fordham University demonstrates the close relationship between sex trafficking and the need for housing, finding that among the runaway and homeless youth surveyed who reported engaging in commercial sex activity, 48% indicated that a lack of a safe place to sleep was a main reason for their initial entry into prostitution or other commercial sex.\(^6\)

\(^3\) Urban Institute, Youth Count! Process Study, July 2013 at page 1. Available at: http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412872-youth-count-process-study-2.pdf

\(^4\) Id.


In Fiscal Year 2014, there were 329 certified residential beds in New York City. This an increase from the previous year when funding was increased to expand capacity for runaway and homeless youth. CCC is appreciative of the increase included in last year’s Executive Budget and we are seeking the same addition this year. Homeless youth are still being turned away every month due to a lack of shelter beds so it is clear more must be done. In addition to an increase in beds, we believe homeless youth need access to a variety of services including health, mental health, education and counseling and we would like to see additional resources added to the budget to provide services for homeless youth.

Runaway and homeless youth services not only provide a critical safety net, they enable vulnerable youth to be safely re-united with their families, divert hundreds of youth from costly placement through the courts, keep minors in school, and provide older homeless youth the opportunity to continue their education and achieve self-sufficiency.

We look forward to working with the Administration and the City Council to enhance services and capacity for runaway and homeless youth.

3) Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)
SYEP is a win-win for youth, their families, communities and the NYC economy. SYEP is an invaluable program that provides youth ages 14-24 with a six-week summer work experience, training, income and lessons in financial literacy. The program provides a youth with up to six-weeks of paid employment, as well as an educational component. Wages earned help to supplement family income, youth learn about budgeting and saving, and much of the earned income is spent in the local economy. An important part of the SYEP program is the educational component, which is comprised of a formal orientation, weekly 5-hour workshops for younger youth, and the ability to learn how to manage money. SYEP offers youth training in work readiness, time management, and job search skills, as well as financial literacy.

Given these benefits it is not surprising that historically the SYEP program always receives many more applications than job opportunities available. This past summer 130,489 youth submitted applications and only 47,126 youth were able to participate. This trend is typical, with annual applications ranging from the 120,000-140,000 and participation ranging from 28,000-50,000.

The 47,000+ youth served was based on a total of $66.2 million being allocated to the program. It is important to note that 10,640 of those youth were able to participate due to $15.2 million invested by the City Council in FY15 and unfortunately that funding was not restored and/or baselined in the FY16 Preliminary Budget. In addition, with the increased minimum wage, the State Executive Budget only proposed to add $3 million, which will not be sufficient to maintain last summer’s number of youth served.

Not only must we be sure that the FY16 Executive Budget includes the funding to serve the same number of youth as last year (47,000), we need to expand this program so that we can enroll 50,000 youth this summer. Serving 50,000 youth at the new minimum wage will require adding

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$21.5 million (including the Council restoration). CCC will be urging the administration to make this critical investment and we urge the City Council to as well.

Conclusion
In conclusion, we appreciate all of the efforts both the Administration and the City Council are making to maintain and strengthen the youth service system in New York City and we look forward to seeing additional investments in the FY16 Executive Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.