



Testimony of

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Public Testimony  
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Good afternoon. My name is Stephanie Gendell and I am the Associate Executive Director for Policy and Government Relations at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC). CCC is a 71-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe.

I would first like to thank Chair Ferreras and members of the City Council Finance Committee for holding today's hearing on the Fiscal Year 2016 Executive Budget and for the opportunity for public testimony.

Attached to this testimony is CCC's summary of the Executive Budget's impact on children and families and the Campaign for Children's Fact Sheets on child care and after-school. CCC's full testimony on the entire budget will be offered as part of the Public testimony on June 9, 2015 after all of the committees have held their budget hearings and we have had the opportunity to hear from all the relevant City agencies.

We would like to use today's hearing as an opportunity to express our overarching concerns and address issues that we feel need to be tended to immediately and discussed with the agencies throughout the budget hearing process.

First, we are deeply concerned that in many ways the Executive Budget is not transparent. Instead of the typical PEG (Program to Eliminate the Gap) process used by previous Mayors, this Administration has instead submitted "citywide savings." While we may not have liked the PEGS and we may have advocated against them, it was imperative that the City Council, the advocacy community and the general public was aware of the programs and services that were proposed to be cut.

For instance, when Mayor Bloomberg sought to close direct lease child care centers, we saw this as a PEG in the budget. While we did not like it, we all became aware of the issue and were able to work with the City to develop plans to save centers in some instances. The de Blasio administration has already closed at least 1 direct lease site this fiscal year and there appear to be an additional 7 that are on a list slated for closure. None of these 8 center closures appear in the Executive Budget documents. In addition to being very concerned about this permanent loss of capacity of approximately 600 seats, there are additional direct lease sites with leases coming due and we do not know what the City's plans are for these centers.

It is important to remember, that every time we close a center, the center and its capacity to service children 0-4 is gone forever, unless a plan is made to create a new site in the same community. Similarly, the staff from those programs no longer have a job.

When Mayor de Blasio was chair of the City Council General Welfare Committee he understood this and on April 10, 2008 he held an oversight hearing on, “ACS’s efforts to preserve child care centers in NYC.” This is what he said:

**“My bottom line is the closing of one child care center is one too many, and we have to look at these as absolute precious resources. We have to understand that when there is a closure, it affects the children, it affects the parents, it affects the people who work at the center and it affects the broader community. And when this precious resource is lost, we don’t get it back, and that’s my fear...**

**So we can’t eliminate slots, we have to find a way to preserve them and in fact build our capacity going forward.”**

-Mayor Bill de Blasio, as Chair of the General Welfare Committee, April 10, 2008.

We agree with these sentiments and hope that the Mayor and his Administration will ensure that capacity is not permanently lost. We also urge the City Council to help stop these center closures and for any center that cannot be realistically saved, ensure that the capacity is maintained in the same community for children 0-4 (not just for 4-year olds).

Another issue of concern in the Executive Budget is that several city agencies have unspent funds in Fiscal Year 2015, which we feel could have been spent on services for children and families. For example, in the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) budget, there is a savings of \$8.666 million of unspent funding for the current Fiscal Year 2015. Meanwhile, we have learned that the agency ended its \$1.2 million contract for the specialized services that find forever families for youth who would otherwise age out of foster care. In addition, ACS could have spent the funding on post-adoption services, bringing back the discharge grant for families and youth, and a host of other services for children in foster care.

ACS also had nearly \$8.2 million in unspent City Council funding for priority 5 child care vouchers. If ACS was not able to use all of the vouchers timely, we feel that the funding could have certainly been redirected within the child care budget. For example, as described in the Head Start audit, there are a number of ACS child care and head start centers that could have benefited from using this one-time funding for facility repairs.

Finally, our most imminent concern is the **City’s plan to cut 17,000-40,000 summer camp slots for middle school students**. In March, the Department of Youth and Community Development sent award letters to COMPASS/SONYC programs (previously called middle school OST) telling them that they would have summer programming and DYCD alerted Beacon and Cornerstones that they would have the same level of summer funding as they did in FY 2014.

Frighteningly, we still do not know exactly how many summer camp slots are being cut because there are a number of SONYC programs not on the DYCD list that received the letters rescinding their awards. We do know that Beacons and Cornerstones are being returned to their FY 2013 funding level.

Relying on the awards programs received in March, the providers hired staff and recruited children. In some instances, due to the high demand, programs held lotteries to select the children. For many families, these summer programs are a lifeline that enable them to work while their children are safe and receiving academic and social enrichment.

**On May 7, 2015, these providers were alerted that the summer funding was redirected and would no longer be available for summer camp. This is unacceptable.**

In addition, this summer camp issue must be rectified before the budget is adopted because parents need to know now (not the end of June) where their children will be this summer and staff need to know now that they have a job (or else they will find a new one and not be available in June if the Council restores the funding.) We urge you to join us in pushing the administration to rectify this situation immediately.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to sharing our full testimony in June.