Testimony of

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Regarding the
New York City
Fiscal Year 2017 Preliminary Budget

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Good afternoon. My name is Alexis Henry and I am the Policy Associate for Early Education, Education and Youth Services at Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York, Inc. (CCC). CCC is a 72-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-Copeland and Eugene, as well as the members of the City Council Committees on Finance and Youth Services for holding today’s hearing regarding the City’s Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2017 and Youth Services.

The Preliminary Budget proposes to fund a number of previously announced initiatives for children and families, related to education, behavioral health and addressing homelessness. Unfortunately, however, the Preliminary Budget failed to include funding for a number of critical programs and initiatives that are important to addressing income inequality and ensuring the well-being of New York City’s children and youth. Notably, as it relates to Youth Services, the Preliminary Budget failed to address rates for Beacons, Cornerstone and COMPASS after-school programs, failed to restore or add funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), and cuts summer programming for nearly 31,000 middle school students.

We appreciate the City Council’s long-standing commitment to Youth Services. Countless numbers of children and youth have been able to participate in SYEP and after-school programs, as well as receive the safety and support of the runaway and homeless youth system, because of your relentless advocacy and restorations. We look forward to working together in the coming weeks and months to ensure the Executive Budget and Adopted Budget better support the youth of NYC.

**a) After-school and Summer Programming**

While CCC applauds the Administration’s successful expansion of middle school after-school, there is much more that the Administration must do to meet the needs of elementary and high school students and provide adequate rates for providers. Furthermore, CCC is deeply disappointed that the Preliminary Budget cuts summer programming for nearly 31,000 middle school students.

After-school programs enable parents to work while their children are both safe and receiving stimulating, nurturing and developmentally appropriate care. Similarly, the same families relying on after-school programs from 3-6 PM during the school year, need safe and developmentally supportive programs for their children during July and August.

When the Bloomberg administration created the Out-of-School Time (OST) program, the program provided care to children after-school, during school holidays and during the summer months. Thus most after-school slots, now called COMPASS, include summer programming. This is critical, particularly for low-income children, to help prevent summer learning loss.

Unfortunately, the summer slots at risk this summer are related to Mayor de Blasio’s after-school expansion for middle school students (called SONYC). Mayor de Blasio stated at his briefing on the Preliminary Budget, “There are some things that we chose not to continue. We talked last year about the summer after-school program. That’s something we thought was a good thing but was not necessarily a priority we could devote to. So that’s not in here.”
We must make summer programming, rates and expansion a priority. Please see below for more details regarding our after-school/summer priorities:

- **Restore $20.35 million for summer programs for 31,000 middle school students immediately:**
  Summer programming must be a priority and the funding ($20.35 million) must be added to DYCD’s budget as soon as possible. Summer programs prevent summer learning loss, while enabling parents to work knowing their children are somewhere safe.

  The funding for summer programs must be restored as soon as possible. Providers and parents cannot wait beyond April for this issue to be resolved because the providers need to plan for the summer.

  These summer programs are critical. Last year, CCC and the Campaign for Children surveyed the parents of children attending city-funded summer programs and found that 91% of the parents said they relied on the program to be able to work or go to school. In addition, 64% of the surveyed parents said they relied on the program for free, nutritious summer meals for their children.1

  Attached to this testimony are two maps showing the cuts by Community District and Council District. You can see that the cuts are throughout the City, but will hit some of the highest need communities the hardest.

- **Add $8.8 million to ensure all elementary COMPASS (formerly OST) after-school slots are paid the same rate:**
  Currently, the rate for elementary after-school is $3,200 per participant. The exception is for the elementary school slots that had been restored by the City Council during the Bloomberg Administration—these programs only receive rather 2,800 per child. These lower funded programs have been told to save money by not having an educational consultant. This must be resolved in this budget so that we do not have two elementary after-school systems.

- **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.

- **Add $24.62 million to increase funding for Beacon community centers to $650,000 each:**
  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

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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.

- **Increase the rate for NYCHA Cornerstone Centers:**
The administration has increased the number of NYCHA Cornerstone Community Centers because they provide critical hubs of services and activities for children, youth and families living in NYCHA. Unfortunately, the funding model does not work for many of the providers. The rate must take into account facility needs and security costs.

- **Increase the capacity to serve more elementary and high school students:**
The middle-school after-school expansion has been an incredible success. The administration needs to build on this success by increasing the opportunities available for elementary and high school students. Currently there are long waiting lists for elementary school children and very limited options for high school students.

b) **Summer Youth Employment Program**

SYEP is a win-win for youth, their families, communities and the NYC economy. SYEP is a six-week summer program that provides youth ages 14-24 with work experience, training, income and lessons in financial literacy.

Given the benefits it is not surprising that historically, SYEP always receives many more applications than job opportunities available. This past summer, 131,897 youth applied for SYEP, but the program was only able to enroll 54,263 youth (41% of applicants).² As has often been stated, getting an SYEP slot is literally winning the lottery. Notably, 18,306 of last year’s youth participants were only able to participate because of the $21 million the City Council added to SYEP in last year’s adopted budget.

- **Create a plan for SYEP to reach 100,000 youth and ensure at least 60,000 youth can participate in the summer of 2016:**
The City’s Preliminary Budget failed to adjust SYEP funding to accommodate the increased minimum wage from January 2016, failed to baseline the $21 million added by the City Council in the FY16 budget, and failed to add any additional capacity to the system. This is very disappointing.

The current City budget for SYEP for the upcoming summer (FY17) only includes $35.9 million from the City and $15.8 million from the state. This would only enable 33,383 youth to participate. (Note that if NYC received the same amount of private funding and federal Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) funding as last year, the City would have enough funding for 38,289 youth to participate).

² NYC Department of Youth and Community Development. *Annual Summary SYEP, 2015.*
We urge the Administration to create a plan to reach 100,000 youth through SYEP, so that every interested young person can participate. Ideally, this would happen in time for 100,000 youth to participate this summer. This would require an additional $95.6 million in city funds and would need to happen by the Executive Budget so that the SYEP providers can have time for such a large expansion.

If the Administration does not baseline additional funding for SYEP in the Executive Budget, we hope that the City Council will be able to work with the administration to add funding to the Adopted Budget. At a minimum, we hope the budget will ensure the same number of youth can be served this summer with the January 2016 minimum wage increase, but we hope to continue expanding the program and reach 60,000 children this summer.

To reach 60,000 children this summer we would need to add a total of $33.6 million to restore the slots added by the City Council last year, fund the minimum wage increase and add 6,000 slots. These 60,000 slots would be a step in the right direction toward reaching 100,000 slots by FY 19 and would be a manageable increase for providers should the additional summer slots not be announced until the budget is adopted in June.

c) Runaway and Homeless Youth Services (RHY)
CCC is very pleased that the Preliminary Budget proposes to add $4.94 million for RHY shelter beds and that the City has a plan to add 300 more RHY beds over the next 3 years. We are also pleased that the City is working with the State to change the law to extend the length of stay for youth in State funded beds (from 30 to 45 days with an option to extend for 90 days). We are also pleased that at the General Welfare Hearing, Commissioner Banks’ testimony noted that staff would be deployed at DHS shelter entry points to offer services and youth beds for individuals 16-21 year old.

As the City completes its 90 day review of services for the homeless, we hope that the City will also be developing plans for this population that will include additional options for youth who transition out of the RHY system into permanent housing.

d) Restore and Baseline City Council Initiatives
CCC appreciates the City Council’s long-standing commitment to investing critical resources into Youth Services. We will be urging the Administration to restore and baseline the initiatives supported by the City Council in Fiscal Year 2016 and we hope the City Council will do so as well.

Specifically, these are:
- $12.0 million for a Year-Round Youth Employment Program
- $9.89 million for more than 3,400 COMPASS after-school program slots (at 50 programs)
- $8.16 million for Cultural After-School Adventure (CASA)
- $850,000 for Big Brothers Big Sisters
- $800,000 for New York Junior Tennis League
- $1.02 million for NYC Digital Inclusion and Literacy Initiative to address disparities in internet access
- $349,654 for Coro’s NYC Youth Council to represent the 51 Council Districts
- $1 million for Sports and Arts in School Foundation
- $1.0 million for Sports Training and Role models for Success Initiative (STARS)
- $343,840 for the Student Voter Registration Day Initiative
- $3.0 million for TASC After-Three Initiative
- $350,00 for the YMCA After School Academy
- $2.1 million for the NYC Youth Build Project Initiative

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.