



Testimony of

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Presented to the

New York City Council

Committee on Youth Services

***Oversight:***

***DYCD Programs (SYEP, COMPASS NYC & SONYC)***

October 11, 2018

Good afternoon. My name is Alice Bufkin and I am the Director of Policy for Child and Adolescent Health at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC). CCC is an independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. I would like to thank City Council Youth Services Committee Chair Deborah Rose, as well as all the members of the City Council Youth Services Committee for holding today's Oversight Hearing on DYCD Programs, including SONYC, COMPASS NYC, and SYEP.

CCC is grateful for the City Council's longstanding commitment to youth services. The Council has been a steadfast ally and partner to protect and expand the programs that provide youth with positive social, academic, and career-development supports that contribute to numerous benefits for the youth throughout their lives. This past year, thousands of additional children and youth were able to participate in summer camp programs, elementary after-school programs, the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), and Work, Learn & Grow because of the City Council's commitment to the next generation of New York City's leaders.

We also appreciate the investments Mayor de Blasio and DYCD Commissioner Chong have made in youth services over the past five years, including expanding the middle school after-school program, increasing capacity in SYEP, and increasing the number and rate for Beacon community centers.

**We believe more work remains to build upon earlier investments and program expansion, and we urge you to consider the following recommendations to strengthen elementary, middle, and high school after-school programs, summer programming, and the Summer Youth Employment Program.**

**1. Ensure all SONYC after school programs include summer programming.**

CCC is grateful for the City Council's strong support for SONYC summer programs, which helped lead to the inclusion of \$17.5 million in the FY 2019 Adopted Budget to fund 22,800 slots in summer programs for middle school students.

Despite these critical restorations, we know that we have yet to meet the full need for summer programming for middle school students. The \$17.5 million in the FY 2019 Adopted Budget is \$2.5 million less than these programs were funded in FY 2017, and funding is only for one year. Funding does not currently enable every middle school student enrolled in SONYC after school programs to access a summer program, as was originally envisioned when the model was developed.

In four of the last five Executive Budget proposals, the Mayor has eliminated the summer component for at least 34,000 middle school students. This year, funding for a portion of the summer slots was not restored until shortly before the programs needed to launch. This caused anxiety for parents, and placed particular burdens on low-income parents who need to work during the summer months.

**SONYC summer programs must be funded and baselined at \$20.35 million in the upcoming FY 2020 Preliminary Budget to serve the 34,000 middle school students who need access to summer programming.**

Included in this testimony is a map and chart detailing where the 34,000 children live who will not have summer programming if a cut is proposed again. Notably, much of this capacity is in high needs districts, with over 1,000 slots due to be cut in East Tremont in the Bronx, East New York and Brownsville in

Brooklyn, the Lower East Side, Central Harlem and East Harlem in Manhattan, and The Rockaways in Queens.

If summer programming is not restored for these 34,000+ middle school students, families will be left with hard decisions. Parents or guardians will be forced to either take time away from work, pay for costly private child care, or leave children unsupervised. For students, programming during the summer months is just as important as programming during the school year. Summer programs provide extra-curricular education support, positive social environments, safe supervision, recreation and healthy living activities, and a multitude of artistic, cultural, and job-exploration opportunities. Alternatively, students who are idle all day long in the summer months are particularly vulnerable to experimenting in negative behavior and losing academic gains. Idle teenagers are also likely to spend more time in front of a tv, computer, or cell phone screen.<sup>1</sup>

It is also imperative that the funding for summer programming be included in the Preliminary Budget and not restored at the last-minute as part of the budget dance. This past summer, funding was not restored until the budget was adopted in June. This meant many summer after-school providers were not able to adequately plan, hire, and prepare for their summer programs. Similarly, many families faced great anxiety over whether summer programs would be available, and were not prepared to take advantage of summer programming with such short notice.

This past summer Citizens' Committee for Children and the Campaign for Children surveyed agencies providing SONYC after-school and summer programming to learn more about the impact that the late partial restoration had on summer camp programs this summer (see attached). The survey documented that while thousands more middle school students were able to go to camp this summer due to the restoration, there were thousands more unable to attend.

The programs we surveyed collectively serve 11,076 middle school students during the school year. Without the restoration, they would have only been able to serve 2,247 middle school children, or 20% of students served during the school year. With the partial restoration, these agencies were able to serve 6,371 children.

**CCC asks the City Council to continue to be strong defenders of summer programming, and to champion ending the budget dance over summer camp programs once and for all.**

**2) Implement universal access to full-year after-school/summer programs for elementary school children and increase rates.**

CCC greatly appreciates the City Council's commitment and support for elementary after-school programs. After-school programming enables parents to work while their children are safe and participating in academically and developmentally appropriate activities. Afterschool is particularly critical for children in elementary school who are too young to care for themselves.

The Council's leadership led to \$16.8 million being restored and partially baselined in last year's adopted budget, allowing 9,000 additional elementary school students to participate in COMPASS after-school programming. Unfortunately, this funding was only for one year. **We believe that \$8 million in funding should be restored and baselined in the upcoming Preliminary Budget to maintain current**

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<sup>1</sup> Jean M. Twenge, Thomas E. Joiner, Megan L. Rogers, and Gabrielle N. Martin. *Increases in Depressive Symptoms, Suicide-Related Outcomes, and Suicide Rates Among U.S. Adolescents After 2010 and Links to Increased New Media Screen Time*. Clinical Psychological Science. 2017. Summary available at <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/11/171114091313.htm>.

**levels of afterschool capacity. We also look to the administration to build on its investment by expanding COMPASS elementary capacity so it can become a universal program.**

In addition, there are still issues related to reimbursement that must be addressed to allow providers to adequately implement programming. We appreciate that, in response to concerns from nonprofit providers, the City cancelled the most recent requests for proposals for COMPASS and SONYC programs. We are also glad that the administration has stated their intention of collaborating further with the nonprofit community to determine an appropriate rate structure.

A remaining challenge is that there are still two different rates for elementary after-school programs, despite these programs offering similar services. Programs that had been previously funded by the City Council (before they were baselined at the end of the Bloomberg administration) are funded at a lower rate, as these programs are not required to have an educational coordinator.

**We ask that this inequality in rates be rectified so all elementary after-school programs can be funded at the same rate. We also believe that the rate should be increased to address the actual costs to providers who carry out these programs.**

We also urge DYCD to address several other issues to improve reimbursement for both SONYC and COMPASS. These include fully implementing indirect rates and Cost of Living Adjustments; addressing the increase in the minimum wage; and funding to cover the cost on an increased threshold for overtime exemptions.

### **3) Address enrollment priorities for students in shelters and prioritize their enrollment in after-school and summer programs.**

In New York City last year, one in ten public school children were homeless. Nearly 62% of homeless children are chronically absent from school, more than twice the rate for those in permanent housing.<sup>2</sup> It is our hope that DHS and DYCD can work together to ensure that these children are enrolled in afterschool and summer programming. Afterschool and summer programming are critical supports for all children, and particularly homeless students who can benefit from social and academic supports that help to breakdown social isolation and promote academic success.

Unfortunately, there are a number of barriers for students in shelters and hotels with regard to participating in afterschool and summer programs. For example, children who are bused from school typically leave school before the program starts. Children who transfer schools mid-year, particularly elementary school children, often find the programs are full at their new school. Additionally, summer programming currently gives priority to children in the after-school program, meaning that if a student in shelter is not participating in the after-school program, they will not be given priority for summer enrollment.

**As the city continues to develop its after-school and summer programming, we urge the City Council, DHS, and DYCD to consider the unique needs and vulnerabilities of children in shelters.**

### **4) Provide stable, reliable, multi-year funding to create sustainable programs, including by providing a sufficient per-child rate in SYEP to ensure quality standards are met.**

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<sup>2</sup> The City of New York Independent Budget Office. "Testimony of Liza Pappas: To the New York City Council Committees on Education and General Welfare on Support for Homeless Students." October 11, 2017.

SYEP provides youth with a paid job during the summer period. This benefits youth in many ways, including providing the youth with compensation, basic personal finance skills, workplace experience, vocational skills, career planning opportunities, professional interactions with adults, resume building, and potentially beginning long-term employment with the employer. It also benefits the participating businesses and organizations as they gain subsidized workers who may become full-time staff.

CCC was a member of the Mayoral Task Force on SYEP and hopes to see a plan that will enable SYEP to grow to meet the needs of at least 100,000 youth in a time frame that is workable for the providers. After the SYEP lottery was completed, nearly 50% of youth who applied for SYEP (over 70,000) were denied participation due to lack of available capacity.<sup>3</sup>

The City Council's leadership led to a FY19 Budget that baselined funding for a record high 75,000 young people to work through the Summer Youth Employment. We look forward to working with the Council, the Administration, DYCD, the providers and the advocates to ensure SYEP can continue to grow in future years.

In the fall of 2017, DYCD released a Concept Paper for SYEP. CCC would like to highlight several issues that we hope will be addressed in the upcoming RFPs for SYEP:

- **To effectively operate SYEP, there must be a sufficient per-child rate to ensure quality standards are met.** DYCD's Concept Paper for the upcoming SYEP Request for Programs does not specify actual per-participant-price (PPP) for each service option, but merely states a range of \$325 to \$1,000 PPP. DYCD should specify the PPP for each service option in the RFP. Additionally, \$325 for any service option is too low for providers to effectively administer and support youth in SYEP placements. The \$325 PPP has been the rate since 2004, and new contracts are an opportune time to address this low rate. We urge DYCD to increase this rate, particularly considering increased demands of the new program models proposed in the Concept Paper.
- **CCC opposes the SYEP Concept Paper's proposal to eliminate the worksite option for younger youth and replace it with project-based experience.** We believe both options should be available to Younger Youth. We also believe the stipend for Younger Youth should be increased, as the current \$700 stipend is equivalent to less than minimum wage. This means participating youth will be discouraged from applying, and those that participate will have less money available to support their families. Finally, we believe youth should be provided with a transportation subsidy, so they do not face additional barriers to reaching their program sites.

**In conclusion, we greatly appreciate the City Council's commitment to protecting, supporting, and championing youth services in New York City, as these services provide the support and opportunities that often provide the tangible difference for a youth's long-term success.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

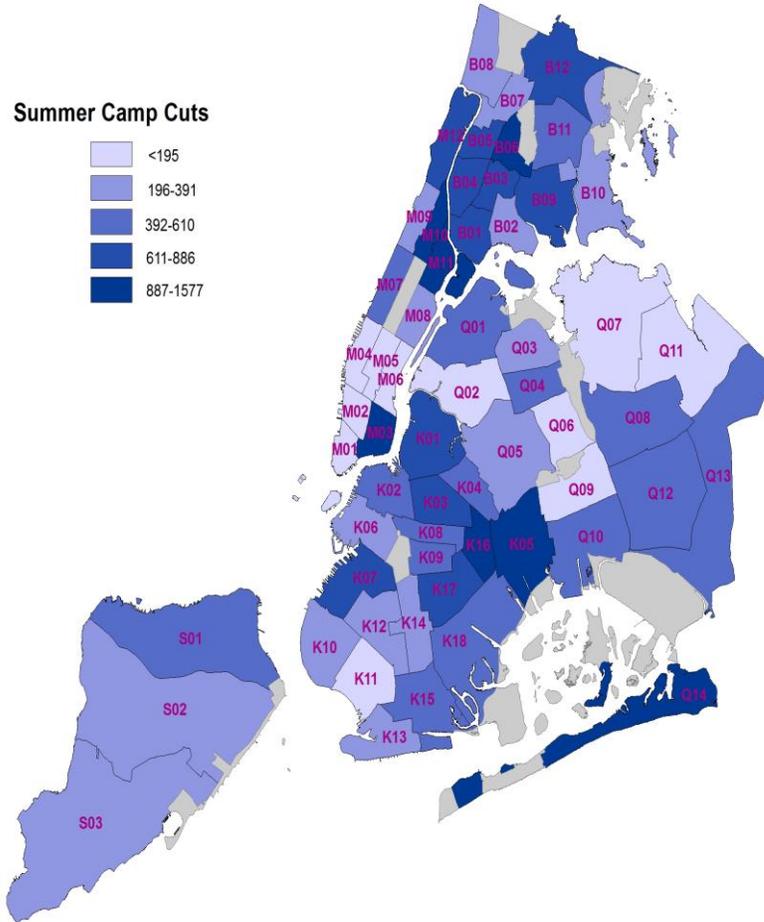
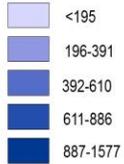
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<sup>3</sup> 2017 Annual Summary – Summer Youth Employment Program. NYC Department of Youth and Community Development. Accessed on March 8, 2018. Available at [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/2017SYEP\\_Annual\\_Summary.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/2017SYEP_Annual_Summary.pdf).

## Appendix 1: Summer Camp Slots at Risk, by Community District

**Cuts by Community District**

**Summer Camp Cuts**



Community District	# of Summer Slots at Risk
Mott Haven (B01)	870
Hunts Point (B02)	350
Morrisania (B03)	715
Concourse/Highbridge (B04)	816
University Heights (B05)	646
East Tremont (B06)	1097
Bedford Park (B07)	300
Riverdale (B08)	390
Unionport/Soundview (B09)	886
Throgs Neck (B10)	375
Pelham Parkway (B11)	500
Williamsbridge (B12)	735
Williamsburg/Greenpoint (K01)	671
Fort Greene/Brooklyn Hts (K02)	505
Bedford Stuyvesant (K03)	845
Bushwick (K04)	541
East New York (K05)	1319
Park Slope (K06)	391
Sunset Park (K07)	727
Crown Heights North (K08)	595
Crown Heights South (K09)	435
Bay Ridge (K10)	281
Bensonhurst (K11)	195
Borough Park (K12)	330
Coney Island (K13)	260
Flatbush/Midwood (K14)	335
Sheepshead Bay (K15)	442
Brownsville (K16)	1577
East Flatbush (K17)	671
Canarsie (K18)	591
Battery Park/Tribeca (M01)	131
Lower East Side (M03)	1030
Chelsea/Clinton (M04)	190
Midtown Business District (M05)	100
Murray Hill/Stuyvesant (M06)	50
Upper West Side (M07)	526
Upper East Side (M08)	295
Manhattanville (M09)	265
Central Harlem (M10)	1087
East Harlem (M11)	1281
Washington Heights (M12)	798
Astoria (Q01)	470
Sunnyside/Woodside (Q02)	145
Jackson Heights (Q03)	242
Elmhurst/Corona (Q04)	475
Ridgewood/Glendale (Q05)	305
Rego Park/Forest Hills (Q06)	195
Flushing (Q07)	185
Fresh Meadows/Briarwood (Q08)	555
Woodhaven (Q09)	80
Howard Beach (Q10)	491
Bayside (Q11)	105
Jamaica/St. Albans (Q12)	610
Queens Village (Q13)	560
The Rockaways (Q14)	1137
St. George (S01)	510
South Beach (S02)	390
Tottenville (S03)	320