



Testimony of

Raysa S. Rodriguez  
Associate Executive Director  
Policy and Advocacy

Before the  
New York City Council  
General Welfare

Regarding the  
New York City  
Fiscal Year 2020 Preliminary Budget

March 25, 2019

Good afternoon. My name is Raysa S. Rodriguez and I am the Associate Executive Director for Policy and Advocacy at Citizens' Committee for Children. CCC is a 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 Levin and King, as well as the members of the City Council Committees on General Welfare and Juvenile Justice for holding today's hearing regarding the City's Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2020.

CCC has analyzed the impact that the CFY'20 Preliminary Budget proposals would have on New York's children and families (analysis attached to this testimony). On the positive side, the Preliminary Budget proposes investments in Fair Fares reduced-price Metrocards; 3-K expansion, strategies to reduce and address childhood exposure to lead; expands healthcare to NYC residents; invests in implicit bias training for city agency workers; and the Summer Youth Employment Program. These are positive and needed investments.

Sadly, however, the City's FY'20 Preliminary Budget once again fails to fund summer programs for over 34,000 middle school students; does not address salary parity for teachers and staff in community-based early childhood programs; would eliminate Bridging the Gap, a program that has added MSWs to schools with high rates of homeless students; and fails to fund a wide range of City Council initiatives that have historically ensured that community based services for addressing health and mental health disparities, housing instability, food and income insecurity, school climate and youth development needs, as well as address the particular needs of immigrants and low-income New Yorkers needing legal assistance.

Moreover, the Mayor has required every city agency (except for the public housing authority) to identify budget savings that will collectively add up to \$750 million and a detailed plan for these savings will be included in the City's Executive Budget when it is released in April.

CCC is incredibly grateful to the City Council for its long-standing commitment to the needs of families served by the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), Human Resources Administration (HRA) and Department of Homeless Services (DHS).

But, there is much more work to be done to ensure every child is healthy, housed, educated and safe.

In these challenging times, our testimony seeks to draw attention to the needs of children and youth and to identify priorities that the City administration and City Council should champion as you move into the budget negotiation process.

## CHILD WELFARE

### **Implement Additional Recommendations of the Foster Care Task Force**

- CCC is grateful to the City Council, ACS, and members of the Interagency Foster Care Task Force who worked collaboratively to develop critical and important recommendations to improve the well-being of children in foster care. CCC continues to work with the City and advocate at the State level to ensure all 16 recommendations are implemented. This includes continuing to advocate for statutory enhancements to the child welfare housing subsidy bill, for ACS and DHS to collaboratively find ways for foster children to visit their parents living in homeless shelters, and to expand foster youth and former foster youth access to behavioral health services.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Access to high-quality early childhood education is critical for positive child outcomes and for working parents. CCC appreciates the commitment from the de Blasio administration to ensure every four-year old has access to full day Pre-K and to expand this to three-year olds. CCC also supports invests to expand 3-K for All

The early childhood system in New York City is in the process of undergoing a significant transition, with the contracted subsidized child care system being under the Department of Education. It is critical the needs of early childhood system be addressed before this transition is finalized.

### **Establish Salary Parity for Early Educators and ensure a smooth and positive transition of EarlyLearn from ACS to DOE.**

New York City's early education system is currently undergoing major changes with the expansion of Universal 3K and the transition of EarlyLearn early childhood programs from ACS to DOE. This budget offers an opportunity to make critical, necessary investments in a strong birth-to-five early education system. However, with the exception of funding for 1,900 new 3-K seats in the Bronx and Brooklyn, the budget fails to make needed investments in the early care system. In particular, the FY20 budget fails to invest in salary parity, despite the opportunity provided as the city commences rebidding the entire contracted early education system.

CBO early childhood teachers earn significantly less than DOE teachers with the same level of education, with first-year BA-certified CBO teachers earning \$42,000 compared to \$57,000 for a DOE teacher with the same education level and credentials. Teacher salary for MA certified CBO teachers their first year is \$47,000, compared to \$65,000 for their counterparts at DOE. After 8 years on the job, a BA teacher at a CBO would earn \$44,000 and an MA teacher would earn \$49,000, compared to their DOE peers who would earn \$77,000 with a BA and \$85,000 with a Masters. As the Mayor continues to emphasize equity in education, it is important to

remember that teachers in CBOs are primarily black and Latina women, unlike their counterparts at the DOE.

Notably, the job is the same except that the teachers in CBOs also work from 3-6 PM and during the summer months, meaning that the CBO staff earn less money while working more hours. This has caused challenges for CBOs as their experienced staff continue to leave for jobs in DOE schools with higher pay.

As abovementioned, the city administration is in the process of rebidding the entire contracted early education system, with the expectation that new contracts for Universal PreK, 3-K, and subsidy-eligible infant and toddler care will be announced next fall and will come online in July 2021. In addition to failing to fund salary parity, the new RFP fails to fund a number of other key areas that are necessary for a seamless 0-5 system.

First, the new RFP does not include cost escalation, meaning reimbursement remains flat for the full contract term, even if costs trend up over time. Second, the RFP does not consider extended and year-round services as “core hours” leading to disparities in funding for these important hours of care, and a potential bifurcation in quality. Third, the RFP returns reimbursement to a “pay for enrollment” structure that guarantees reimbursement for only 72% of costs. Fourth, the RFP fails to pay for indirect costs like rent. Finally, the RFP forbids direct head start grantees from bidding to provide services, thereby impeding providers’ ability to offer a full range of services or to meet funding federal requirements (for 20 percent of resources being other than federal). Each of these areas must be addressed if New York wants to ensure a successful, high-quality early care and education system for children.

**Make all homeless young children living in shelters categorially eligible for child care.**

- There is no question that homeless children under 5, living in shelters could benefit from participating in an early childhood education program. While ACS has given eligible homeless children priority for child care, the parents still need to be working or otherwise eligible. Given the instability in the lives of homeless parents and their children, we believe that these children should be categorially eligible by virtue of living in a shelter, which is allowed under federal and state law.

**FAMILY HOMELESSNESS**

Homelessness remains at crisis levels in New York City. According to DHS’s Daily Report, on March 22, 2019 there were 12,418 families with 21,881 children sleeping in DHS homeless shelters.<sup>1</sup> Homeless families with children comprise 70% of individuals in shelter.

The only Preliminary Budget proposal fails to make significant investments to tackle this crisis.

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of Homeless Services Daily Report. March 21, 2018  
<http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/dailyreport.pdf>

CCC is co-convenor of the Family Homelessness Coalition, which has submitted a number of recommendations to the administration which we hope to see funded in the Executive Budget. These include:

### **Support Students who are Homeless**

Funding for key educational supports for homeless students is eliminated in the Preliminary Budget FY'20. Three years ago, the Administration began several initiatives to provide the necessary educational support for students living in shelters, including Bridging the Gap social workers to work in schools with high numbers of students living in shelters.

- Today, there are record high numbers of students experiencing homelessness; more than 1 in 10 NYC students are experiencing homelessness. In 2017-18, a record 114,659 New York City students were identified as homeless.
- Students experiencing homelessness have poorer educational outcomes than their housed peers. Students living in family shelters fair even worse—nearly 38,000 students during the 2017-18 school year. Homelessness can expose children to high levels of toxic stress and trauma. In addition, students living in shelters have higher rates of disability, suspension, lower proficiency rates in both reading and math, and higher rates of chronic absenteeism.

**The City must restore the \$13.9 million included in the FY 19 budget and provide an additional \$6.5 million to hire an increased number of Bridging the Gap social workers to focus on serving these students, establish an Educational Support Center at PATH, and hire additional central and regional managers to help run the DOE's Students in Temporary Housing program.**

- Currently, 69 DOE social workers are working in schools with high numbers of students living in shelters. Social workers provide counseling services, connect students with academic support and other support services, and aim to reduce chronic absenteeism. **However, more than 100 schools with 50 or more students living in a shelter do not yet have a Bridging the Gap social worker.**

**We strongly recommend a restoration of the existing funding for the 69 social workers and adding an additional 31 social workers in order to provide a total of 100 Bridging the Gap social workers.**

**In addition, while the City seeks to reduce the use of hotels, we must address conditions to ensure the well-being of children and families STILL living in them as transitional and temporary housing. There are simple solutions we can implement that require small investments including:**

- Eliminating the practice of requiring families in hotels to move rooms every 29 days.
- Ensure families in hotels have access to laundry.

- Ensure families in hotels have access to high quality, palatable food that meets the needs of clients with special dietary restrictions. Note that homeless families in hotels do not have kitchens and are unable to store food in their hotel rooms. Creative ways to bring food to families in hotels, such as vans, must be explored.
- Create space in the hotels for children to play and for families to have visitors during specified hours.

## **JUVENILE JUSTICE**

CCC applauds the city for moving forward with implementation of raising the age of criminal responsibility with city resources and sustaining city support for Close to Home. We believe the success of both initiatives requires an emphasis placed on rehabilitation and youth development and we urge the city to expeditiously move away from the use of corrections officers in detention and placement facilities for older youth, 16 and 17 year olds, as planned.

## **CITY COUNCIL INITIATIVES**

The City Council’s continued leadership and commitment to children and families is noteworthy. The Council’s support has been instrumental to the success of many highly regarded programs and the tens of thousands of youth who rely on such programs.

**We appreciate the investments the City Council made in FY19, many of which have a long history of Council support. We hope to see these programs restored and baselined in the upcoming Executive Budget.**

### **Child Welfare and Domestic Violence**

- \$7.805 million for Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DoVE) Initiative
- \$1.95 million for Supportive Alternatives to Violent Encounters (SAVE)

### **Criminal Justice Services/Juvenile Justice**

- \$6.407 for Alternatives to Incarceration programs
- \$1.4 million for a Bail Fund
- \$1.71 for the Center for Court Innovation
- \$1.35 million for the Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault, which includes child advocacy centers
- \$1.0 million for Support for Victims of Human Trafficking
- \$600,000 for video visitation for incarcerated persons’ families in public libraries

### **Early Childhood Education/Child Care:**

- \$9.855 million for Discretionary child care programs
- \$4.242 million for the City’s First Readers Initiative (DYCD)

### **Homeless and Housing Services**

- \$1.0 million for Children and Families in the NYC Homeless System Initiative
- \$820,000 total for the Citywide Homeless Prevention Fund

- \$3.65 million for Community Housing Preservation Strategies
- \$450,000 for Financial Empowerment for NYC’s Renters
- \$1.0 million for the Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention Program
- \$2.5 million for Stabilizing NYC, a citywide coalition to prevent the loss of affordable housing

**Food and Economic Security**

- \$930,000 for Access to Healthy Food and Nutritional Education, which includes restorations for EBTs in Farmers’ Markets
- \$725,000 for the Food Access and Benefits Initiative
- \$4.0 million for food pantries
- \$2.8 million for the Anti-Poverty Initiative
- \$3.048 million for Worker Cooperative and Business Development Initiative

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 make the tangible difference for children and families’ long-term success. We are hopeful that the Executive Budget can build upon the worthwhile investments in all these programs with fully restored and baselined funding.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



## **Summary of the New York City Fiscal Year 2020 Preliminary Budget** **Impact on NYC Children and Families**

On February 7, 2019 Mayor de Blasio released his \$92.2 billion Preliminary Budget for City Fiscal Year 2019, which begins July 1, 2019.

The Preliminary Budget proposes investments in Fair Fares reduced-price Metrocards; 3-K expansion, strategies to reduce and address childhood exposure to lead; expanded healthcare to NYC residents; implicit bias training for city agency workers; and the Summer Youth Employment Program.

On the other hand, the City's Budget once again fails to fund summer programs for over 34,000 middle school students; does not address salary parity for teachers and staff in community-based early childhood programs; would eliminate Bridging the Gap, a program that has added MSWs to schools with high rates of homeless students; and fails to fund key City Council initiatives.

Moreover, the Mayor will be requiring every city agency (except for the public housing authority) to identify budget savings that will collectively add up to \$750 million. A detailed plan for these savings will be included in the City's Executive Budget when it is released in April.

A detailed summary of the City's FY'2020 Preliminary Budget proposals that impact children and families may be found in the following pages:

## **The Preliminary Budget for FY 2020** **Adds Funding for the Following Initiatives**

### Early Childhood Education

- \$25.261 million for 3K expansion starting (increases to \$35.096 million in FY 2021 and \$41.047 million in FY 2022)

### Education

- \$9.278 million for Science Curriculum (FY 20 and FY 21 only)

### Food and Economic Security

- \$106 million for Fair Fares (reduced price MetroCards for low income New Yorkers) in FY 2020

### Health and Mental Health

- \$2.3 million for DSS, HRA, and DHS agency-wide staff implicit bias training and body-worn cameras for all HRA Peace Officers (\$1.054 million in outyears)
- \$1.231 million for LeadFreeNYC: Coordinated Care for Elevated Blood Lead Levels (same in outyears)
- \$227,000 for LeadFreeNYC: Improvements to citywide immunization registry for lead-related notifications (same in outyears)
- \$500,000 for NYC Well Quality Assurance (same in outyears)
- \$25.0 million for NYC Care in FY2020 (increases to \$75.0 million in FY 2021 and \$100.0 million in FY 2022)

### Housing Quality

- \$4.263 for LeadFreeNYC in FY 2020 (\$1.551 million in outyears)

### Juvenile Justice

- \$2.938 for Adolescent Population Reduction Strategy (initiatives to divert 16- and 17- year olds from detention or shorten their length of stay in jail) (\$4.357 in outyears)

### Youth Services

- \$30.775 million for Summer Youth Employment Program (increases to \$32.775 in FY 2021 and \$34.775 in FY 2022). Funding reflects changes to the SYEP RFP to fund minimum wage increase and higher intensity services for priority populations.
- \$14.0 million transfer of afterschool services from Administration for Children's Services to the Department of Youth & Community Development.

## **The Preliminary Budget for FY 2020 Fails to Fund Key Initiatives**

The Fiscal Year 2020 Preliminary Budget does not include funding to support numerous initiatives that were funded for one year when the CFY19 city budget was adopted.

- \$20.35 million for at least 34,00 middle school after-school summer program slots (FY19 budget included a one-year partial restoration of \$15 million for 22,800 children)
- \$11.9 million for students living in shelters, which includes 53 MSWs in schools with high rates of homelessness (funding in FY 2019 also included an additional \$2.0 million in City Council funding)

- \$19.0 million for Work, Learn and Grow, a year-round youth employment program
- \$2.567 for community school's sustainability
- \$200,000 for LGBTQ Family Outreach
- \$1.3 million for Restorative Justice
- \$3.5 million for Urban Advantage
- \$500,000 for Youth Health Initiative at ACS
- \$4.5 million for child care (ACS)

## **The Preliminary Budget for FY 2020 Does Not Fund City Council Initiatives**

The Fiscal Year 2020 Preliminary Budget does not include funding to support City Council Initiatives that were funded when the CFY19 city budget was adopted.

### **Child Welfare and Domestic Violence**

- \$9.305 million for Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DoVE) Initiative
- \$2.45 million for Supportive Alternatives to Violent Encounters (SAVE), which includes \$600,000 for Project CONNECT at ACS

### **Criminal Justice Services/Juvenile Justice**

- \$8.107 million for Alternatives to Incarceration programs
- \$1.71 million for the Center for Court Innovation
- \$2.81 million for the Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault, which includes child advocacy centers
- \$1.2 million for Support for Victims of Human Trafficking

### **Early Childhood Education/Child Care:**

- \$5.36 million for Discretionary child care programs (funding was \$9.855 million FY 2018)
- \$4.44 million for the City's First Readers Initiative (DYCD)

### **Education:**

- \$500,000 for Child Mind Institute
- \$3.0 million for community schools
- \$2.485 million for the Dropout Prevention and Intervention Initiative
- \$4.39 million for Educational Programs for Students, which includes programs such as Chess in the Schools, Expanded Schools and the Middle School Quality Initiative
- \$2.0 million for Guidance Counselors for All Schools
- \$250,000 for the Jill Chaifetz Helpline operated by Advocates for Children
- \$600,000 for LGBTQ Inclusive Curriculum
- \$1.925 million for Physical Education and Fitness
- \$20.805 million for Support for Educators, which includes Teacher's Choice school supplies and the Executive Leadership Institute
- \$2.0 million for Support for Homeless Students, Bridging the Gap school-based social workers

### **Economic Security**

- \$2.8 million for the Anti-Poverty Initiative
- \$3.499 million for Worker Cooperative and Business Development Initiative

### **Food Initiatives**

- \$1.055 million for Access to Healthy Food and Nutritional Education, which includes restorations for EBTs in Farmers' Markets (DYCD)
- \$725,000 for the Food Access and Benefits Initiative (HRA)
- \$4.6 million for food pantries (DYCD)
- \$1.0 million for a Halal and Kosher School Lunch Pilot (DCAS)

### **Health Services**

- \$2.5 million for Access Health NYC
- \$350,000 for Beating Hearts (automated external defibrillators for non-profits serving youth and the elderly)
- \$646,000 for Child Health and Wellness, which includes various programs such as obesity prevention, asthma programs and oral health services
- \$1.693 million for Maternal and Child Health Services initiative
- \$344,788 for Reproductive and Sexual Health Services
- \$1.775 million for Trans Equity Programs

### **Homeless and Housing Services**

- \$1.35 million for Children and Families in the NYC Homeless System
- \$820,000 total for the Citywide Homeless Prevention Fund
- \$3.65 million for Community Housing Preservation Strategies
- \$450,000 for Financial Empowerment for NYC's Renters
- \$650,000 for Housing Court Answers
- \$1.0 million for the Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention Program
- \$2.5 million for Stabilizing NYC, a citywide coalition to prevent the loss of affordable housing

### **Immigration Services**

- \$10 million for the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project
- \$2.0 million for the Unaccompanied Minors and Families Initiative

### **Legal Services**

- \$5.3 million for Legal Services for Low-income New Yorkers, which includes citywide legal services and the SSI advocacy project
- \$485,000 for Legal Information for Families Today (LIFT)
- \$3.205 million for Legal Services for the Working Poor

### **Mental Health Services**

- \$3.237 million for the Autism Awareness Initiative
- \$1.002 million for the Mental Health Services for Children Under 5 Initiative
- \$2.85 million for the Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative
- \$2.179 million for Developmental, Psychological and Behavioral Health Services
- \$1.2 million for the LGBTQ Youth All-Borough Mental Health Initiative
- \$500,000 for Medicaid Redesign Transition
- \$1.794 million for Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations, which includes the Samaritans Suicide Prevention hotline

### **Youth Services:**

- \$6.303 million for Afterschool Enrichment Initiatives
- \$1.813 million for COMPASS elementary after-school
- \$1.2 million for Big Brothers and Big Sister of New York City
- \$550,000 for Civic Education in New York City Schools
- \$1.2 million for Sports Training and Role Models for Success Initiative (STARS)
- \$2.1 million for Youth Build Project Initiative
- \$15.3 million for Cultural After-School Adventure (CASA) (DCLA)

### **Young Women's Initiative**

- The Fiscal Year 2020 Budget fails to restore \$4.242 million (funding was \$5 million in FY 2018) to fund key YWI recommendations:
  - \$417,500 for a Dedicated Contraceptive Fund
  - \$350,000 for an Initiative for Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence
  - \$250,000 for HRA Teen RAPP Enhancement
  - \$275,000 for the Prevent Sexual Assault (PSA) Initiative for Young Adults
  - \$154,000 for Step in and Stop it Initiative to Address Bystander Intervention
  - \$600,000 for Work-Based Learning Internships
  - \$1.1 million for Wrap-Around Support for Transitional-Aged Foster Youth
  - \$1.096 million for Young Women's Leadership Development