



Testimony of

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Good afternoon. My name is Phoebe Plagens and I am the Senior Public Affairs Associate for Communication and Volunteer Engagement 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-Copeland 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.

The Executive Budget builds on the Preliminary Budget by taking additional steps to address income inequality, child safety and child well-being in New York City. Specifically, the Executive Budget includes city funding for 100 new shelter beds and mental health services for runaway and homeless youth; a restoration of \$5.9 million for 17 after-school programs at risk of closure; funding for additional programs to help the homeless be safe in shelters and transition to permanent housing; funding to increase city oversight of subsidized child care programs; funding for capital improvements to juvenile detention centers and child care centers; and funding for home visits for families in shelter. The Executive Budget also continues the Administration's commitment to the second phase of expansion of pre-k for all 4-year olds, after-school for 107,000 middle school students, and transforming 96 of the City's lowest performing schools into community schools. Finally, state and federal resources are included to support the continuation of free middle school lunch. Notably, the Executive Budget also calls for a 2.5% COLA for staff at non-profit social service agencies and a minimum salary of \$11.50 per hour.

Despite this good news, there are a number of essential programs and services for children and families that CCC is very disappointed to see were not funded in the Executive Budget. The Executive Budget failed to fund many of CCC's key priorities such as universal free lunch for all public school students, universal Breakfast After the Bell, child abuse prevention services, emergency food programs, and Summer Youth Employment Program capacity for 50,000 youth. Notably, the Executive Budget does not address pressing early childhood education needs including the Early Learn rate, adequate compensation and benefits for child care staff, funding to prevent direct lease child care sites from closing, nor funding to expand capacity to serve children ages 0-3. Similarly, the new awards for COMPASS/OST elementary slots (programs previously funded by the City Council) reduce the rate from \$3200 to \$2800, and there was no investment in increasing the rates for after-school programs, Beacons or Cornerstones, nor to expand the after-school system capacity to serve elementary and high school students. Finally, the Executive Budget failed to fund many City Council initiatives that CCC supports such as EBTs in farmers' markets, mental health services for court-involved youth, or child advocacy centers, among others.

Before turning to the individual agencies, we need to convey how deeply concerned we are 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 is aware of the programs and services that are proposed to be cut.

### **Administration for Children’s Services**

We are concerned that in the Executive Budget, the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) had approximately \$24 million in Fiscal Year 2015 that was unspent and used as citywide savings. Specifically there was \$8.3 million in unspent City Council funding for priority 5 vouchers; \$8.2 million in adoption subsidy savings (a baselined reduction) and \$8.666 million of in current year underspending.

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. In addition, 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.

We urge ACS to be more transparent in the Adopted Budget and ensure that their resources are well-spent in the upcoming fiscal year.

### **Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice**

The Executive Budget includes very little in terms of new investments for child welfare or juvenile justice.

There are new funds to address some of the issues at the Nicholas Scoppetta Children’s Center, where DNAinfo has reported there were 1,600 AWOLs in 13 months.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the Executive Budget proposes adding \$36.7 million in capital funds for renovations to the Horizons and Crossroads secure detention facilities.

While CCC supports these proposals, we would have liked to see the ACS budget go further in addressing the needs of children and families touched by the child welfare and/or juvenile justice system. Notably, funding to create a primary prevention program, to address the delays

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<sup>1</sup> *City to Move Teens Out of Troubled ACS Shelter to Park Slope Space*, DNAinfo, 6/1/15. <http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20150601/kips-bay/city-move-teens-out-of-troubled-acs-shelter-park-slope-space>. See also, *Kids Went Missing 1,600 Times From One City-Run Children’s Shelter*, DNAinfo, 9/15/14. <http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20140915/kips-bay/kids-went-missing-1600-times-from-one-acs-center-data-show>.

and permanency for foster children, to ensure post-adoption and post KinGAP services are available, and to continue Close to Home implementation were not included.

### **Child Care**

CCC was deeply disappointed that ACS's budget proposals related to child care did not include many of the issues that CCC, the City Council and other advocates have been pressing the administration about regarding EarlyLearn. This includes failing to include any funding to address the EarlyLearn rate, salary parity, health insurance, facilities costs, and the need to increase capacity for children ages 0-3.

In addition, we are also dismayed that the Deputy Mayor failed to release the recommendations from her task force on early childhood education, thereby excluding those recommendations and budget priorities from the FY2016 budget negotiations. CCC and our colleagues had hoped that this report would have laid out a plan for strengthening and expanding the early childhood system and that the FY2016 budget would have included some new resources for the system, which would have shown the administration's commitment to addressing long-standing, systemic needs.

Furthermore, we are very concerned that the City has already closed one direct lease site and that there are 7 more sites slated for closure either because leases are not being renewed or because the CBO felt it was not fiscally viable to continue providing EarlyLearn child care services. Taken together, these 8 sites represent a capacity loss of 600 slots to the early childhood system. A forthcoming report by the Campaign for Children will document that the City only serves 14.4% of income eligible infants and toddlers and there are over 200,000 income eligible children under 5 not receiving child care.

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).

We appreciate the City Council's long-standing commitment to preserving child care centers and the Council's recognition that child care centers often have long-standing relationships with communities that need to be recognized as key to community. We know that there are 15 child care programs that currently serve children and we appreciate the Council's commitment to trying to maintain these programs.

Finally, we do support the Executive Budget proposals to reduce the parent fee for pre-kindergarten students by 61% (although we would prefer it be eliminated), add capital funding for facilities/rectifying health code violations, increase ACS staffing and oversight of child care and Head Start programs in response to the Head Start audit findings, and increase the number of low-income child care vouchers.

### **Department of Education**

CCC appreciates the administration's commitment to improving educational outcomes and improving struggling schools. With over 1.1 million school children spending the majority of their days in NYC public schools, we must ensure that they are safe and receiving the academic, developmental, and social supports necessary to graduate college and career ready.

We continue to be grateful for the administration's commitment to expanding high-quality pre-kindergarten to all 4-year olds. The infusion of \$406 million in FY16 is estimated to enable 70,000 4-year olds participate in full day prekindergarten programs. The success of this initiative will be a life-changer for many NYC children. We look forward to continuing to work with the administration to ensure every 4-year old child is served and that this expansion lays the groundwork for strengthening the City's early childhood education system.

We also appreciate the administration's commitment to struggling schools and the investment of resources to make them Renewal schools/community schools. This paradigm shift, in which resources and attention are directed toward struggling schools to put into place new ideas aimed at better engaging parents, better supporting teachers and principals, and improving the classroom and outcomes for children is a step in the right direction. We appreciate the Administration's commitment to expanding school-based services, such as mental health services, health care services, vision screenings and dental services, through the community-school model expansion. School-based service models have been proven to bridge treatment access gaps for school-aged children by bringing much-needed services to where children are, thereby increasing the likelihood that student needs are evaluated and treated. The availability

of health and mental health services in schools has been linked to higher test scores and graduation rates as well as fewer absences.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, we believe that the Executive Budget needed to go much further to better meet the needs of NYC's public school students. For example, we feel that the Executive Budget needed to include resources to dedicate more new funding to the Renewal schools; decrease class size; make universal lunch available in all grades; make Breakfast After the Bell universal; and enable city schools to be in compliance with state physical education requirements.

With regard to school meals, we were deeply disappointed that the Executive Budget failed to expand the universal lunch program beyond students in stand-alone middle schools. Initial estimates show a 9% increase in the take-up rate for middle school lunch participation in the first year of implementation. This equals 10,000 fewer hungry students every day and the elimination of countless moments of stigmatization for the low-income children previously classified as free or reduced price. Citywide universal lunch would eliminate this stigma for all public school students and improve lunch participation by an estimated 20%- or 120,000 children. While we were pleased that free lunch is baselined for children in stand-alone middle schools, and we know that the City Council has been a tremendous ally on this issue, we urge you to continue to push the administration to make lunch universal for every student next year.

We also appreciate the City Council's commitment to universal Breakfast After the Bell/Breakfast in the Classroom. According to the most recent annual Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) school breakfast report, NYC once again has a dismal breakfast take-up rate and is ranked 61 out of 62 urban school districts.

Breakfast After the Bell/Breakfast in the Classroom would increase the take-up rate and ensure that school children have the nutritious meals they need to learn and grow, by providing breakfast during the school day as opposed to before school starts since many students are not able to arrive early. It would also eliminate the stigma of eating breakfast before school in the cafeteria.

Finally, we also urge the administration and the City Council to negotiate a budget for FY 16 that enables more schools to hire physical education teachers. Physical education is critical for students because they learn about health, nutrition, exercise and teamwork; have the opportunity to engage in physical activities; and engaging in physical education has been shown to increase academic performance. Unfortunately, New York City is currently out of compliance with state regulations regarding physical education. A recent report by NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer highlighted that over 32% of schools lack a fulltime certified physical education teacher. While other barriers to compliance exists, adding funding to hire more teachers is a

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<sup>2</sup> "School-based Health Centers and Academic Performance: What is the Intersection?" <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED539815.pdf> Accessed 6/1/2015

critical first step toward ensuring all schools have the resources they need to comply with New York State physical education requirements.

### **Department of Health and Mental Hygiene**

CCC has long advocated for the expansion of school-based mental health services. With community-based outpatient clinics unable to sufficiently accommodate children's mental health needs, schools are a convenient alternative to identify and treat those needs. While the Administration's current plan only expands mental health services into the new Community Schools, we think that this is a significant step forward. Currently, approximately 220 of 1,800 NYC public schools have some degree of mental health services available on-site.<sup>3</sup> While this reflects a huge service gap, the funding of mental health services in community schools will nearly double the number of schools that offer on-site mental health-related services.

CCC encourages DOHMH to build upon their work with the Department of Education so that in the near future, every New York City public school student will have access to these critical services. We are pleased that funding is included in the Executive Budget to fund the creation of a comprehensive database of school-based mental health services to help schools make timely referrals and create formal linkages.

While the Executive Budget proposes to expand access to children's health services in a number of venues including schools, homeless shelters and Rikers, CCC is concerned about the fragile status of several former Council Initiatives that have yet to undergo DOHMH's competitive contracting process, including the Mental Health for Children Under Five Initiative, the NYU Dental Van, and the Autism Awareness Initiative.

For years, these three programs have used non-traditional, community-based settings to help identify children and families in need and offer developmentally appropriate services and support. The Mental Health Services for Children under Five Initiative has provided screening and psychotherapy to over 4,000 families as well as mental health consultation services to numerous pediatricians, preschool teachers and child welfare workers. As the Council is aware, this funding represents the only dedicated funding in New York City to provide this level and type of expertise to young children and families in need. Neither Early Intervention, nor outpatient mental health clinics offer appropriate supports to sufficiently serve this special population.

The NYU College of Dentistry Mobile Dental Van, *Smiling Faces, Going Places*, now in its 15th year, has brought critically-needed dental services, oral health preventive care, and educational programs to over 30,000 New York City children. The mobile van travels throughout the city's five boroughs, five days a week, 48 weeks per year, during school hours and in the evening, to visit more than 60 public schools, day care centers, community centers and local health fairs.

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<sup>3</sup> NYC Department of Education "Listing of School-Based Mental Health Clinics (as of April 2, 2015)" Accessed on 6/1/2015

The Initiative also provides funding to the NYU Pediatric Dental Clinic, which provides free or low-cost pediatric dental treatment and prevention education for children up to 14 years of age, with special facilities for newborns and infants.

The Autism Awareness Initiative has supported social and recreational services for over 500 autistic children in after-school or summer programs and during school closings, as well as provided parent training and educational workshops to families and school staff. These programs have offered families a safe space for their children with autism to learn how to interact and succeed in educational and social settings, and allowed parents the flexibility and peace of mind to return to work.

Contracts for these three important programs are set to expire on June 30<sup>th</sup>. After extending baselined contracts for one year in FY15, this year the Administration announced its intention to consolidate the number of funded providers through a competitive RFP process that has yet to be launched. A one-year funding renewal for these initiatives in FY16 will ensure that communities continue to be supported during this transition year. It will also enable providers who are not awarded new contracts to responsibly ramp down their services and staffing. Without immediate action from the Administration and the Council, staff will be abruptly laid off, and community members will be left unserved as current providers have nowhere to refer them to.

To this end, CCC respectfully requests the Administration and the City Council negotiate a budget that includes funding for the Mental Health Services for Children under Five, Autism Awareness and Dental Van Initiatives:

- \$1.45 million to maintain Mental Health for Children Under 5 services with the 8 current providers for one more year to allow services to continuity of services pending the outcome of the still unreleased RFP
- \$268,000 to maintain the NYU Dental Van and Pediatric Clinic.
- \$2.0 million to maintain Autism Awareness services with the current providers for one more year to allow continuity of services pending the outcome of the still unreleased RFP.

Finally, CCC respectfully requests that the City Council create a new initiative, Access Health NYC, which would provide pre- and post-enrollment health insurance assistance to parents, children and individuals. We believe this would cost \$5.5 million for citywide outreach and assistance.

Although New York City has one of the lowest rates of uninsured children of any large city in the country, approximately 68,000 children still do not have health insurance coverage.<sup>4</sup> The goal of this initiative is to link hard-to-reach and underserved New Yorkers, including uninsured children and families, individuals with disabilities, formerly incarcerated people, and families living in shelters, to healthcare coverage and existing free or low cost healthcare options.

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<sup>4</sup> Uninsured Children. *Keeping Track of New York City's Children, Eleventh Edition (2015)*.  
<http://data.cccnewyork.org/data/map/86/uninsured#86/60/2/132/14/a> Accessed 6/1/2015

Furthermore, the success of the New York Health Exchange not only depends on new enrollments, but on the ability of new enrollees to use their health insurance. Many families have difficulty navigating the health insurance system, not to mention understanding basic terms associated with health insurance coverage such as premiums, networks, and co-pays. Access Health will help New Yorkers understand their rights as health care consumers and effectively use their new health insurance benefits to access timely, high quality care.

### **Department of Homeless Services**

CCC is grateful for the administration's commitment to reducing family homelessness and we are pleased that the family shelter census has finally started to decline. We believe the decline is the result of the multi-prong approach the administration has taken to prevent homelessness, provide paths out of shelter and help support families as they transition out of shelter to permanent housing.

Unfortunately there are still over 23,000 children and over 11,000 families in the Department of Homeless Services' (DHS) shelter system. The Executive Budget proposes many new initiatives in both DHS and HRA aimed at addressing homelessness prevention, shelter conditions, child safety and well-being, and housing assistance programs to help families leave shelter to permanent housing. CCC is pleased that the Fiscal Year 2016 Executive Budget for DHS proposes to create a shelter system that is safer, cleaner and more service-rich. CCC supports these Executive Budget proposals.

The Executive Budget also proposes to improve shelter safety and conditions by adding funding for enhanced shelter security, shelter maintenance and repairs, and capital dollars to renovate and upgrade family shelters. All shelters must be clean and safe, especially if children are living there, so we are pleased to see funding proposed to repair and upgrade family shelters to better provide families with the safe and healthy living environment they deserve.

The Executive Budget continues efforts to prevent homelessness by proposing to add funding for a Homebase Media Campaign, increased family shelter intake staffing, a new Prevention Team, and the PATH Community-Based Demonstration Project aimed at improving homeless prevention efforts at family shelter intake.

The Executive Budget proposes to better ensure child safety and well-being through a number of initiatives that we support. This includes the creation of Child Safety Teams, the addition of licensed clinical social workers at family shelters, and the expansion of the newborn homevisiting program to mothers with infants in shelter.

Finally, the Executive Budget proposes new resources aimed at helping families transition out of the shelter system to permanent housing. CCC supports these initiatives including funding for new DHS staff to work on the LINC housing subsidy programs and the creation of Permanency Specialists who will provide advocacy, support, assistance, oversight and training to shelter providers related to housing permanency.

## **Human Resources Administration**

### **Homelessness**

The Human Resources Administration (HRA) plays a major role in the administration's multi-prong approach to reducing the number of homeless families and children in shelter. And, CCC is appreciative of the new and expanded programs under HRA that prevent families from becoming homeless, provide rental subsidies to help families exit the shelter system and offer aftercare services for families when they leave shelter.

The best way to reduce the number of homeless families and children in shelter is to prevent them from becoming homeless in the first place. The administration's commitment to homeless prevention is evident in this year's proposed budget. By adding funding for anti-eviction legal services, outreach to find and prevent homelessness and expanding funding for rent arrears. Notably, the Executive Budget proposes to create a new rental assistance pilot program modeled after FEPS, which will provide rental assistance to families BEFORE they end up in the shelter system.

Sometimes homelessness cannot be prevented and families will still need to turn to the shelter system. CCC supports the Executive Budget proposals that expand the City's rental assistance programs by increasing funding for the Living in Communities program (LINC) and creating a new LINC program for families who move in with other families.

While it is likely more will need to be done to help all families exit the shelter system, we are appreciative that the administration is committed to the success of these rental assistance programs. The administration's commitment to the success of LINC is further evident in the renewed commitment to funding landlord incentives. Funding incentives to increase landlord participation in LINC has been included in this year's budget even though this was initially intended to only be a short-term one year program. Without landlord buy-in LINC would not be successful and we are happy the administration recognizes that this need still exists.

Additionally, CCC has always believed that families need supportive services to help them in their transition from shelter to stable housing. We are therefore grateful that this budget proposes to expand aftercare services to help families with this transition.

### **Food and Income Support**

Far too many hard-working New Yorkers are living in poverty. According to the most recent U.S. Census data, New York City's overall poverty rate is 20.9%, which means that one in every five New Yorkers lives in poverty. Even more sobering, the child poverty rate in New York City is 29.8%, meaning 520,000 NYC children lived in poverty in 2013. We appreciate the efforts of Commissioner Banks to streamline and simplify many of HRA's processes and his efforts to make the agency less punitive. This will go a long way towards helping to lift New Yorkers out of poverty.

In addition, many New Yorkers who live in poverty work at minimum wage jobs, and need higher wages in order to support themselves and their families. CCC supports the Executive

Budget proposals to raise the minimum salary for staff at non-profit social services agencies to \$11.50 per hour and to give human services workers a much-needed 2.5% COLA.

CCC also supports the Executive Budget proposal to add \$14.8 million for expansion of the IDNYC initiative. We are extremely pleased that New Yorkers are so interested in obtaining these IDs and we appreciate all of the efforts of both the Administration and the City Council in making IDNYC a reality.

We urge the administration and the City Council to adopt a budget that goes further to advance food and economic security for families. Specifically, we urge the City Council to ensure that \$6.2 million is added for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) (for a total of \$14.4 million). EFAP provides food and technical assistance to approximately 500 food pantries and soup kitchens throughout New York City. An astonishing 16% of NYC residents rely on food pantries or soup kitchens.

While SNAP benefits are a critical component of the food security of New Yorkers, not all New Yorkers are eligible or enrolled and for those who are, SNAP allotments are often insufficient to meet the needs of hungry children and their families. Since the November 1, 2013 federal SNAP cut, vulnerable New Yorkers lost more than 56 million meals. In September 2014, 60% of NYC food pantries and soup kitchens reported running out of food for adequate bags or meals and 37% reported turning families away. Thus, this additional \$6.2 million would help ensure hungry New Yorkers were able to receive much-needed emergency food.

In HRA, there were also several City Council initiatives that were not baselined by the Bloomberg administration that still remain at risk each year. We urge the City Council and the administration to negotiate a budget that restores and baselines \$335,000 for EBTs at farmers' markets, \$60,000 to expand low income farmer's markets, and the many legal services the Council has historically paid for including funds for the Citywide Task Force on Housing Court, Citywide Legal Services, LIFT and Legal Services for the Working Poor.

Finally, we urge the City Council and the administration to restore and baseline other critical City Council initiatives including \$250,000 for the EITC Assistance Program and \$1.2 million for Worker Cooperatives.

#### **New York Housing Authority**

CCC is pleased that the Executive Budget proposes to add \$570.7 million in capital funding to NYCHA over the next 5 years, for much-needed maintenance and repairs. The funding provided by the Mayor will allow NYCHA to begin capital repair work on projects including, but not limited to repairing roofs and mold remediation. CCC appreciates the City Council's attention to ensure that the \$100 million from the state, which the City is matching, is put to the best use possible.

We are also pleased that the Executive Budget attempts to remediate NYCHA's budget issue by adding \$72.5 million to the NYPD annually to relieve NYCHA of its prior obligation to pay for

NYPD services, saving NYCHA \$33 million by eliminating annual PILOT payments, and saving NYCHA \$22.4 million by transferring community and senior centers to DYCD and DFTA.

While these savings and the new state and city funding will be helpful, NYCHA will continue to need additional support to repair and maintain the decaying housing stock. We urge the Council and the Administration to continue advocating at the federal and state levels and to ensure the city continues to invest in capital and quality of life improvements for NYCHA tenants.

### **Department of Parks and Recreation**

Parks, playgrounds and pools are critical community assets that provide children and youth with safe, outdoor spaces to grow, thrive, exercise and play in New York City. CCC urges the administration and the City Council to adopt a budget that strengthens the City's parks and playgrounds by including \$5.4 million to add 204 additional playground associates, as well as additional resources to invest in the capital needs of playgrounds.

### **Department of Youth and Community Development**

#### **Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY)**

CCC is grateful for the administration's commitment to helping the City's runaway and homeless youth. After years of advocating for funding, this is the second year in a row the City has added 100 shelter beds for runaway and homeless youth. Additionally, CCC was extremely pleased to see that the Executive Budget adds \$1.2 million in FY16 and \$2 million starting in FY17 for mental health services for these vulnerable and often traumatized youth.

#### **After-school and Summer Programming**

After school programs have demonstrated great academic, social and emotional benefits for children, families and communities.<sup>5</sup> In addition, summer programming has been shown to mitigate summer learning loss, known as "summer slide," particularly for low-income children. CCC remains grateful to the administration's commitment to after-school programs for middle school students. This year's investment of \$163 million will ensure academic year after-school programming to over 100,000 middle school students—this is remarkable.

On the other hand, CCC was incredibly disappointed and shocked that the administration originally planned to cut 34,000 summer camp slots for middle school students this summer. We are very pleased that the administration has restored the slots for this summer and that resolution came before budget adoption so that families and programs could plan accordingly. This restoration came as a great relief to the thousands of parents who had been relying on these programs to work this summer and to the hundreds of summer camp staff. That said, the administration has also said that they only restored the slots for this summer. We appreciate the City Council's support in working with us and the Campaign for Children to rectify this

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<sup>5</sup> Lopez, M. Elena. (2015). Leave Them Wanting More!: Engaging Youth in Afterschool. *Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE) Newsletter*, 7(2). Retrieved from <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/leave-them-wanting-more!-engaging-youth-in-afterschool>

situation prior to budget adoption, and we appreciate your continued support in working to make these summer camp slots permanent.

CCC was also pleased that the Executive Budget proposes to save the 17 elementary after-school programs that had been funded by DOE and slated for closure this June and that the budget would baseline the current 45 NYCHA Cornerstone Programs and create 24 new ones. These are all steps in the right direction.

Unfortunately, however, there are additional needs in the after-school system, now referred to as COMPASS rather than OST. Most pressing now is that when the city released the new RFP awards for elementary school programs, they decided to use a rate of \$2,800 per slot rather than \$3,200. They did this because the funding for this RFP was the money baselined from after-school slots previously funded by the City Council and the Council had a lower rate. While this prevented the loss of 2,300 slots, it means that some elementary after-school COMPASS programs continued to be paid a lower rate despite the fact that they should all one equal system.

In addition, the entire after-school system struggles with the rates they are paid. This includes the elementary school rate of \$3,200 as well as the rates for both Beacons and Cornerstones. As the Council knows, it has been nearly 20 years without a rate increase for Beacon programs. And finally, while the after-school system has been expanded for middle school students, there is a tremendous need for additional capacity to serve elementary and high school students.

### **Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)**

CCC appreciates the City Council's long-standing commitment to SYEP. As you know, SYEP is a win-win for youth, their families, communities and the NYC economy. SYEP provides youth ages 14-24 with a six-week summer work experience, training, income and lessons in financial literacy. Wages earned help to supplement family income, as well as help youth learn about budgeting and saving. Furthermore, much of the earned income is spent in the local economy.

Thanks to the City Council's investment of \$15.2 million in FY2015, an additional 10,640 youth were able to participate. While 130,489 youth applied last year, only 47,126 youth were able to participate. Unfortunately, while the Executive Budget included funding to address the January 2015 minimum wage increase, it did not restore and baseline the City Council's investment in SYEP. At this time, DYCD only has \$57.7 million for SYEP, which would fund 39,252 children.

According to DYCD, we would need an additional \$14.2 million to serve the same number of children as last year, and \$19.9 million to reach 50,000 youth. We respectfully request that the City Council and the Administration negotiate a budget that restores and baselines funding for SYEP so that we at a minimum, serve the same number of youth this summer.

### **Conclusion**

While the Executive Budget proposals do help move the City in the right direction, we believe that there is much more that needs to be done and remain hopeful that many of these issues can be negotiated in the Adopted Budget. We thank the City Council for being such a tremendous partner in working to make New York City a better place to be a child.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.