



Testimony of

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Committee on Youth Services

Oversight Hearing:  
After-School

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Good morning. 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 Eugene and the members of the City Council Youth Services Committee for holding this important hearing and providing us with the opportunity to testify.

This is such an incredibly exciting time to be testifying about after-school programs in New York City. After years of testifying about the need to save after-school from budget cuts and watching the system shrink in size, I am now testifying after the tremendous expansion and re-branding of New York City's after-school system. CCC is grateful to the City Council for its long-standing commitment to preserving and funding after-school programs. We are also extremely grateful to the de Blasio administration for its unwavering perseverance and commitment to securing funds and vastly expanding the system. This afternoon, over 71,000 middle school students (double the number from last year) will be able to participate in after-school programs—this is truly remarkable.

After-school programs serve elementary, middle and high school children from approximately 3 PM-6 PM after school each day, as well as on holidays and throughout the summer. Youth are at greatest risk for engaging in delinquent behavior between the hours of 3 and 6 PM<sup>1</sup> and every \$1 invested in youth services saves \$3 for participants and taxpayers.<sup>2</sup> High quality after-school programs improve children's development, academic performance and social-emotional well-being. They allow children and youth to engage in academic and developmental enrichment activities in a safe environment. Further they allow parents to work and support their families. Thus, after-school programs are a win for children, families, communities and taxpayers.

Prior to this recent expansion, the largest component of the City's after-school system was referred to as OST (Out of School Time). At its height in Fiscal Year 2008, OST served 87,256 children (45,384 elementary school students; 13,865 middle school students; 13,917 high school students; and 14,799 in multiple grade level programs). Sadly and despite tremendous advocacy and resources restored by the City Council, we saw the OST system continue to decline in capacity to approximately 56,700 children last year. Notably, for two years, over half of those OST slots were funded by the City Council. CCC is grateful to the City Council for this and also to the Bloomberg and de Blasio administrations for ultimately baselining this \$61.4 million for OST.

The City's other two large after-school programs are Beacons and NYCHA Cornerstone. Beacons use schools as a hub for community based programs such as health and mental health

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<sup>1</sup> Fight Crime Invest in Kids. *New York City's Out-of-School Time Choice: The Prime Time for Crime or Youth Enrichment and Achievement*, 2008. Available online: <http://www.fightcrime.org/reports/NYCAS2pager.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Lattimore, C. B., Mihalic, S. F., Grotmeter, J. K., & Taggart, R. (1998); "The Quantum Opportunities Program"; In D.S. Elliot (Series Ed.), *Blueprints for violence prevention: Book four*; Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.

services, ESL classes, and after-school programs. Beacons were designed to give youth a safe place in the community after-school and in the evenings. Approximately 800-1,200 youth are served in each of the City's 80 Beacon after-school programs. Currently, 66 of the 80 Beacon programs are City-funded, while the others are federally funded. There has been no increase in the base contract level of funding for Beacons since they were created in 1991. Thankfully, the City Council discretionary funding for seven of the programs (\$2.146 million) and to prevent an across-the-board cut (\$2.3 million) has now been baselined into the Beacon budget.

NYCHA Cornerstone programs are after-school programs located within NYCHA facilities. There has been an increase in the number of these programs recently and there are now 70 NYCHA Cornerstone programs. This past summer, these programs remained open until 11 PM as a means to reduce youth violence in NYCHA facilities.

As you know, expanding pre-k to all four-year olds and after-school programs to all middle school students has been the top priority for the de Blasio administration. Advocacy from City Hall, the City Council, UPK NYC, the Campaign for Children and hundreds of providers and advocacy organizations secured \$300 million for pre-k and \$145 million for after-school programs for NYC in the New York State Budget. Then, despite the short amount of time to issue RFPs, issue awards, inspect and license programs, and put contracts in place, the expansions rolled out earlier this month and so far they are tremendous successes. The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) deserves to be applauded and recognized for their incredible work on the after-school expansion.

Over the summer, DYCD held a contest to rename the OST program and youth from across the City submitted suggestions. The new name for the OST program is now COMPASS NYC, which stands for Comprehensive After-School System of NYC. It is comprised of over 800 programs serving children in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. In total, it is anticipated that COMPASS will serve 85,000 children and youth.

SONYC (School's Out NYC) is the new name for the middle school after-school model serving children in grades 6, 7 and 8. The roll-out of SONYC includes 34,000 new middle-school after-school seats. This includes 271 new SONYC middle school programs, for a total of 562 SONYC programs. The rate for middle-school programs has been increased to \$3,000 per participant. Over 78,000 middle-school students will be able to participate in SONYC this school year.

We are so thrilled with the middle school expansion, as well as the Mayor and City Council's commitment to high-quality after-school programs. We are therefore hopeful that this remarkable expansion is the first step in ensuring every New York City child has access to high-quality after-school programs. To accomplish this goal, we ask that the Mayor, Department of Youth and Community Development and the City Council commit to the following:

- **Continue to expand access to after-school programs by significantly increasing capacity for elementary and high school students.** It is worth noting that high school programs have been hit especially hard by budget cuts in the previous administration. In addition, for parents to be able to work, they often need care for their young, elementary school children after 3 PM.
- **Address the rates for programs that were not impacted by the middle-school expansion.** While middle-school programs now receive \$3,000 per participant, the rates for elementary and high school COMPASS, Beacons and Cornerstone also need to be adjusted to ensure providers are reimbursed for the cost of care and are able to hire quality staff. It is also important to note that elementary programs previously funded by the City Council are currently reimbursed at an even lower rate than other elementary programs. Furthermore, funding for Beacons has not been increased since 1991.
- **Enhance the elementary school model by ensuring younger children, children with special needs and English Language Learners are engaged in programs that address their unique needs.** This includes ensuring that the 4-year olds in pre-k programs are able to access care after 3 PM, during holidays and during the summer. It likely means creating two types of elementary school programs based on age so that prek students, kindergarten students and first graders have a programs tailored to their young age.
- **Continue to enhance the communication, collaboration and data sharing between agencies (DYCD, ACS DOHMH and DOE), providers and the public.**
- **Ensure funding for elementary summer programming remains intact in the budget by baselining the funds.**

We are looking forward to the continued success of NYC's after-school system. We once again thank the City Council and the administration and look forward to working together on the next phase of ensuring NYC's children have access to high quality after-school programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.