Putting New York’s Children and Families on the Road to an Equitable Recovery:  
A Transition Plan for City Leaders

CCC is a 76-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization. We do not accept or receive public funding, provide direct services, nor represent a sector or workforce; our primary goal is to improve outcomes for children and families in New York. We document the facts, engage and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for solutions to ensure that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe.

As our city begins to recover from the devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical that newly elected leaders prioritize addressing the critical needs of New York City’s children and families.

Families have experienced immense loss of life, job and income loss, and heightened housing and food insecurity, and children within families have experienced social isolation, disruption in education and developmental supports with too many having missed out on months of learning. The presence of multiple and heightened stressors has led to trauma and resulted in skyrocketing behavioral health needs.

These unprecedented challenges have not only exacerbated existing inequities but have drawn attention to long unaddressed needs and barriers to wellbeing rooted in structural racism and systemic discrimination of all forms, with particularly negative impact wrought on women of color and immigrant households.

Incoming city leaders must act with urgency to address the needs of children, families and communities hardest hit by the pandemic to not only promote family and child wellbeing but to avoid repercussions that will be profound, long-lasting, and unacceptably costly in both human and socio-economic terms.

CCC stands ready to partner with city elected leaders and policymakers to prioritize equity, justice, and wellbeing for our city’s children, families, and communities. In addition to informing budget, policy, and legislative action locally, we are ready to work alongside incoming leaders to ensure that decisions made in Albany and in Washington DC result in the financial partnership required for bold progress here at home in NYC.
To promote an equitable recovery that ensures every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe we must:

**All Children Healthy**
- Strengthen access to behavioral health supports for children across systems, including in schools, communities, early care and education settings, and clinics.
  - Promote healthy child development by expanding access to two-generational initiatives, such as HealthySteps and H+H’s 3-2-1 IMPACT model. These models not only integrate primary and behavioral health care for children, but also ensure pediatric and maternal health care is coordinated. These initiatives critically advance whole child health and development and parental health and wellbeing.
  - Promote young child health and development by supporting the integration of behavioral health and Early Intervention services into Early Care and Education programs across all settings, including family based child care and centers based care.
  - Strengthen the continuum of behavioral health supports for students by promoting whole-school, healing centered approaches to school climate; providing adequate and sustainable compensation for school and community-based behavioral health care providers; and increasing students’ access to clinical care options within schools and communities.
- Increase overall access to and eliminate racial and geographic disparities in engagement with Early Intervention services for young children with developmental delays and disabilities, including by:
  - Supporting targeted outreach to families and underserved communities to identify and address barriers to participation.
  - Investing in and bringing to scale community-based initiatives to identify and address racial and geographic disparities in evaluation rates and service provision, mirroring work currently being developed by United for Brownsville.
  - Ensuring all families have access to EI services through the modality they prefer, and ensuring that families using teletherapy have access to the technology, training, and connectivity necessary to receive quality services.

- Address widespread food insecurity by strengthening nutrition and safety net programs; eliminating administrative barriers to accessing support; increasing school food resources; and strengthening opportunities for community stakeholders to engage in the City’s food policy decisions.
- Fulfill the city’s commitment to eliminate childhood lead poisoning by 2010 by proactively identifying and eliminating lead hazards and by enforcing existing local lead poisoning prevention laws.
**All Children Housed**

- Invest in community-based upstream prevention, including, but not limited to, eviction prevention and facilitated access to other necessary health and human services to bring stability to families before housing crisis occurs.

- Monitor implementation of recent increases in the value of City’s rent subsidies, ensuring families in, and at risk of entering, family shelter access subsidies.

- Expand access to affordable and supportive housing options that address the specific needs of youth and families with children and enforce the City Council mandate that 15% of city-funded affordable housing projects units be set aside for households experiencing homelessness.

- Ensure equitable learning recovery for students who are in doubled-up living situations or living in shelter and invest and baseline resources for 150 shelter-based DOE Community Coordinators.

- Increase data transparency across all systems providing prevention services and shelter to families with children and youth; make data publicly available on the utilization and type of prevention services, family demographics at family shelter intake, access to services while in shelter, utilization of housing vouchers by type of voucher, and other performance metrics that can inform policy and budget decisions and strengthen the city’s ability to prevent and end family homelessness.

**All Children Educated**

- Build a truly universal birth to five early care and education system by addressing the dearth of affordable infant and toddler care, as well as the lack of extended-day/extended-year seats in 3K and UPK programs.

- Achieve comprehensive parity between early childhood teachers in the DOE and in CBO-settings by addressing inequities in benefits and longevity increases and extending salary parity to those left out of the initial agreement: CBO preschool special educators, support staff, and center directors.

- Build a universal year-round youth services system by adding elementary afterschool seats until universal access is reached, increasing and baselining funding for summer programming, and increasing compensation for youth services staff.

- Focus an academic recovery plan that seeks to advance and achieve equity with attention paid to support vulnerable student populations, including targeting academic supports for English-language learners, better service delivery for students with special needs, and adding
staff focused on meeting the educational needs of students in temporary housing and students in foster care.

- Integrate the City’s schools by permanently ending the use of discriminatory screens and foster inclusive practices, including, but not limited to, supporting the development and implementation of district diversity plans, culturally relevant curriculum, and creating pipelines for better teacher representation.

- Continue to invest in and promote universal access to citywide Save for College accounts for all public-school kindergarteners, setting a strong path to high school graduation, college application and completion.

- Expand the Summer Youth Employment Program to become universal and continue to invest in year-round youth employment programs like Work, Learn, Grow.

- Foster communication and collaboration across City agencies and youth-serving CBOs by reinstating a Children’s Cabinet and ensure inclusion and engagement of early childhood and youth services leaders, CBO providers, and advocates, among others.

**All Children Safe**

- Prioritize efforts to strengthen families and promote youth and community safety:
  
  o Expand investments in primary and general child welfare prevention to address the intersection of economic insecurity and risks to child safety and family stability; helping to connect families to a wide array of social, economic, and health and behavioral health supports. Access to prevention services should not be driven by child welfare or other systems involvement; voluntary engagement in primary and general prevention must be supported and permitted.

  o Address economic inequality and reduce poverty by deepening New York City’s Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), reforming the city’s child tax credit to expand its reach, and expanding Family Leave and Sick Leave to capture workforce sectors currently excluded.

  o Invest in neighborhood equity with a focus on ensuring access to needed services and infrastructure that promote safety, prevent violence and contribute to healthy child, youth and family development including:
    
    ▪ Embed within City Planning and Economic Development initiatives that increase access to essential supports and infrastructure and address service and infrastructure “deserts.”

    ▪ Ensure all communities have access to affordable food retail and banks; safe and well-maintained parks, playgrounds, and green spaces; accessible, affordable transportation options; adequate streetlights, cross walks, and contiguous sidewalks; and fair, safe, and accountable policing.

    ▪ Improve broadband access through expansion of public Wi-Fi hot spots and other wiring upgrades, as well as affordably priced plans or financial subsidies for households with low incomes.
Lastly, we urge the new administration to further advance race equity through better data processes that can inform budget and policymaking:

- Require the MMR to report out on city agency specific race equity goals/targets, develop and report out on a scorecard that tracks progress or widen disparities over time.

- Require NYC Planning to administer and analyze data from a biannual citywide survey of New Yorkers on a limited number of foundational equity issues, such as economic security, health care access, housing affordability stability, education equity, and transportation and community safety needs.

- Integrate data systems that help analyze and respond to child, youth, and family needs over time, including, but not limited to, integrating data on young child health, Early Intervention, early childhood care and education, K-12 education, after school and summer services.

- Conduct data analysis on city agency and health and human service workforce with an annual report on staffing structures and leadership within city agencies and for the contracted non-profit workforce (race, gender, pay scale).

- Require data from 311 to be aggregated and analyzed in a manner that would help to better understand what New Yorkers are seeking access to.