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Oversight Hearing on Summer 2022 Programming
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Since 1944, Citizens' Committee for Children (CCC) has served as an independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce. We document the facts, engage, and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for New York's children and their families.

I would like to thank Chair Stevens and the Committee on Youth Services for holding this hearing to review Summer 2022 programming.

Summer programming is an essential part of youth development. These programs create opportunities for young people to make money, gain enrichment, build community, and have fun. It is of the utmost importance therefore to ensure that these programs continue to be well-funded, and providers have the resources and time they need to prepare for the summer.

We were pleased to see the increased investment in youth employment, with the increase of baselined youth employment slots to 100,000; of which 90,000 were for the Summer Youth Employment Program. This was the biggest expansion in the program's history, and it was possible because the plan to expand SYEP (Summer Youth Employment Program) was early in the budget cycle with baselined funding, giving DYCD (Department of Youth and Community Development) providers an opportunity to prepare, and the collaboration between DYCD (Department of Youth and Community Development) and the Mayor's Office of Youth Employment. This past summer's success shows how powerful our City can be in improving the lives of young people when we center the voices of youth and providers calling for more opportunities.

Data shows that SYEP (Summer Youth Employment Program) participation decreases arrests and convictions during the summer months for young people involved in the program.¹ Investments are critical to support young people as we recover from the pandemic. We hope NYC (New York City) can move towards a Universal SYEP (Summer Youth Employment Program) program, where every young person who wants to participate is able, regardless of lottery status or immigration status.

The second iteration of Summer Rising was an improvement from the pilot year, yet there were still significant challenges that providers hoped would be addressed prior to the summer beginning that were left unresolved; namely, issues with staffing, enrollment, and operational concerns. This is frustrating as providers and families took the time to express the issues of the program to the City but were ignored. While blending academics and positive youth development is a great idea since they can complement each other, Summer Rising 2022 prioritized academics at the loss of more youth development. This

¹ <https://www.nber.org/papers/w28373>



resulted in youth workers not having the agency to offer the curriculum, programs, and community building they hoped to provide. Furthermore, it is not fair nor equitable that youth who cannot afford summer camp must enroll in a summer school program. Given these constraints, CCC urges the City to shift to a K-8 summer programming model that includes the critical positive aspects of summer camp models. This program needs a sustained increased investment in cost-per-participant rates which results in wider access for families.

With this shift in programming, the City must also restore power to CBOs (Community Based Organizations) to complete the following:

- **Design programming such that it is responsive to local needs**
- **Manage their own budgets without having to go through inefficient processes to justify their spending and secure approval**
- **Enroll families, especially families who need additional digital and language support to apply for programming, and**
 - **Maintain their own rosters so that if there are young people who cannot attend the CBO's programming, CBOs have the power to unenroll that youth and give that slot to a young person who can attend so the slot does not go to waste**
 - **Maintain SACC (School Age Child Care) licensing ratios of staff to youth and allow for budgets that account for the additional staff and OTPS costs**
- **Access more robust and comprehensive trainings to support District 75 youth who do want to enroll into summer experiences in addition to having resources available for that child's specific needs (accessibility equipment, consistent paraprofessional staff presence, clear escalation protocols, and additional layers of support)**

Additionally, the following recommendations are for general summer programming changes that we urge this Committee to consider:

- **Beacon and Cornerstone summer programming deserve cost-per-participant rates on par with their school-based alternatives to ensure secure staffing levels across the system**
- **The City must make immediate payment of all outstanding contracts for any work done in Summer 2021 and Summer 2022 and implement procedures that allow for swift registration of contracts and timely payment for services for all future services rendered.**
- **Planning for future summer programming should be modeled after this year's successful expansion of SYEP—by investing early to give sufficient time to prepare and remaining attentive to feedback from providers and advocates**
- **Shift to year-round contracts so providers have greater flexibility and time to prepare for summer programming.**
- **Expedite the screening of staff and clear the backlog of background checks, to not delay program start times.**

It is essential that all children can benefit from arts, culture, sports, recreation, experiential programming, and trips and that older children have access to employment opportunities. No child should be left out, especially those with academic needs, disabilities, or any other factors. To build back from this pandemic we must invest in our children, and we must invest in ways that promote joy, curiosity, fun, and adventure. To do that, we need robust, well-funded, and organized summer programming.



Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony.