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Citizens' Committee for Children of New York is a 79-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, nor represent a sector or workforce; our priority is improving outcomes for children and families through research and advocacy. 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.

Thank you, Chair Hanif and all the members of the Committee on Immigration, for holding today's important Preliminary Budget Hearing on Immigration. Below, we provide recommendations related to key areas where immigrant children and families must be better supported in the budget to ensure that immigrant households can live, work, and raise families here in New York City and that caregivers and their children thrive.

Access to Child Care and Education

The pandemic has only compounded barriers for English Language Learners (ELL) seeking to access high-quality school and individualized educational supports. Immigrant-serving CBOs across the city have struggled to find adequate enrollment and communications support for newcomer families, and far too many eligible students have been unable to even enter the education system. Today, the City faces a historic number of asylum seekers in need of accessible education and English language supports, and our leaders must meet their needs. **CCC was therefore disappointed to see no added investments for immigrant students in the Preliminary Budget.**

New York students are considered to have aged out of the education system unless they graduate high school by the age of 21. This presents a major hurdle for older, newcomer immigrant youth (ages 16-21) who have little time to learn English and fulfill graduation requirements. Transfer schools can play an essential role in supporting students at risk of dropping out and helping under-credited students work toward graduation. However, up until last year, these transfer schools were not accessible to immigrant youth outside of Manhattan. This year, the DOE expanded access to six transfer programs for English Language Learners (ELLs) in the outer boroughs but has yet to fully fund the robust programming that ELL transfer schools need to

ensure older immigrant youth to succeed.

CCC joins the New York Immigration Coalition and other partners in calling on city leaders to baseline \$3 million to add comprehensive services to the six new English Language Learner (ELL) Transfer School Programs in Queens, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. This funding would employ bilingual social workers, provide robust training for school-based staff, and offer community-based wrap-around supports, bringing these important new programs in line with best practices for newcomers ages 16-21. The funding also includes the capacity to develop a data-driven model that can be replicated throughout the City. **Additionally, we urge the City to enhance students' access to bilingual staff throughout the city, including educators, social workers, and special education teachers.**

CCC believes childcare should be available to all families, regardless of immigration status. Last year's budget included \$10 million to fund the Promise NYC early childhood education and care for children who are undocumented. **The FY2024 Executive Budget must at a minimum extend and baseline \$10 million for Promise NYC to give migrant parents the opportunity to work and become self-sufficient.**

Access to Housing and Improving Shelter Conditions

Stable housing is a vital component of a child's economic, educational, and overall well-being. Immigrant families face greater housing instability compared to the general New York City population¹ and encounter multiple barriers when they are forced to enter DHS-shelters. CCC and our partners within the Family Homeless Coalition strongly support the following reforms that would improve children's education and overall wellbeing and help stabilize housing of immigrant and migrant led households:

- **Expand CityFHEPS eligibility to undocumented families.** A 2022 [CCC housing data analysis report](#) found that immigrant households faced higher rates of overcrowding, rent burden and housing instability compared to the overall New York City population. Currently, only applicants with a valid social security number qualify. This leaves mixed-status families at a disadvantage as their CityFHEPS voucher only covers a portion of the rent for qualifying individuals.
- **Eliminate City FHEPS eligibility requirements: a) the 90-day shelter stay for those in shelter, b) shelter history and c) a housing court eviction, to expedite access to CityFHEPS assistance.** Eliminating these requirements will allow the city to leverage the subsidy as a preventive measure and keep housing insecure families in their homes and out of shelter and ensure that the city is better able to respond to the housing needs of new migrants to the city.
- **Include sufficient funding in FY2024 Executive Budget for shelter services including translation, transportation, legal services, and emergency housing for migrant youth who are struggling to adjust to a new culture.**

Access to Legal Services

Immigrant families need legal representation to help ensure they are able to access available programs and economic opportunities. The City also benefits when it provides these services by helping New Americans enter the workforce and contribute their spending power to help uplift national and local economies.ⁱⁱ CCC urges the City government to include sufficient legal representation funding in FY2024 to support immigrant and asylum-seeking families:

- **Restore City Council initiative funding for the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) (\$17.35 million).** NYIFUP is the largest public defender program in the country for detained immigrants facing deportation. This program has given thousands of immigrant heads of household with the opportunity to remain with their families and made significant contributions to the economy.ⁱⁱⁱ CCC urges the City to ensure City Council discretionary funding for this program is restored in the budget to support immigrants at risk of deportation and keep families together.
- **Enhance support for legal representation of asylum-seekers.** If an asylum-seeker's application to adjust their status is processed within a year of arrival, an asylum-seeking adult can obtain a work permit 180 days after the application was submitted.^{iv} Timely immigration legal assistance is essential to secure work authorization for tens of thousands of recently arrived asylum seekers. The City must enhance funding for legal immigration representation so that asylum-seekers can access employment, support their families, and contribute to the City's economy.

Access to Youth Services and Programs

Youth services and programs provide essential interventions and opportunities for positive youth development. Programs like the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and Work, Learn, Grow provide youth with the opportunity to explore different careers, earn a wage, and strengthen their future job prospects. **We therefore urge city leaders to increase investments in youth employment and youth development programming and enhance supports that enable special populations of youth, including undocumented youth, to access year-round youth development and employment training opportunities.** Currently, undocumented youth are unable to access the full array of youth services offered by the city. Access to these programs is a lifeline for young people and opens doors to incredible futures. All youth deserve opportunity, community, and the right to be involved in the wide variety of programs New York City offers for young people.

ⁱ Housing Insecurity in New York City, 2021. (2022). Citizens' Committee for Children of New York. Data Report. Retrieved from: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cccnewyork.org/2022/11/CCC-Factsheet-on-Housing-SecurityImmigrant-Households.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Truong T. (2022). "Why Immigration Relief Matters: Immigrants Help Build and Strengthen Our Economy". The Center for American Progress. Retrieved from: <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/why-immigration-relief-matters/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Jennifer Stave, Peter Markowitz, Karen Berberich, Tammy Cho, Danny Dubbaneh, Laura Simich, Nina Siulc, and Noelle Smart (2017). "Evaluation of the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project: Assessing the Impact of Legal Representation on Family and Community Unity." New York: Vera Institute of Justice. Retrieved from: <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/new-york-immigrant-family-unity-project-evaluation.pdf>

^{iv} Asylum Application Information (2023). U.S. Immigration and Citizenship Services. Retrieved from: <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-and-asylum/asylum>