Good Afternoon. My name is Emmy Lam and I am a Program Assistant and Worksite Liaison with the Education and Career Services Division at the Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC). Thank you, Chair Rose and members of the Youth Services committee for the opportunity to testify.

Founded in 1965, CPC is a social services organization that creates positive social change. We empower Asian American, immigrant, and low-income communities in New York City by ensuring they have equitable access to the resources and opportunities needed to thrive.

Today, CPC is the nation's largest Asian American social services organization and we are the trusted partner to more than 60,000 individuals and families striving to achieve goals in their education, family, community and career. We welcome community members at every stage of life to over 50 high-quality programs at 33 sites in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens.

As a community provider of the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and Work, Learn, and Grow Program (WLG), we appreciate that the City Council recognizes the importance of youth employment and the positive impact that both programs have on New York City’s young people. However, we are deeply concerned that the FY 2020 Preliminary Budget does not include funding for the Work, Learn and Grow Program. The program was previously funded at $19 million in the City’s FY 2019 adopted budget.

Through my experience as a Worksite Liaison at CPC, I have seen firsthand how WLG bridges the successes of SYEP. The WLG program gives youth participants an opportunity to better understand how to balance their academic and employment responsibilities, while cultivating self-empowerment and continuing to develop a strong and supportive foundation for their future. A few examples of the over 50 worksite partners that CPC collaborates with include local accounting firms, hospitals, real estate agencies, retailers and education centers. The diversity in sectors and industries not only ensure that our youth have different opportunities to explore, but also allows them to build healthy, long-term professional relationships with their mentors throughout the school year while further developing their skill sets.
At CPC, over 70% of our youth worked at least 90% of the maximum 250 hours allocated to each participant in WLG throughout the year. Additionally, over 20% of our youth were given part-time offers of employment by their WLG worksite upon program completion. Our data clearly shows that youth hold themselves accountable and are committed to the program, and that worksites are equally as committed to investing in each youth’s success.

One example of this commitment is a worksite supervisor from a large retailer who remarked how appreciative their company is for initiatives like WLG. The experience allows them to promote WLG as “audition” or screening opportunity across their locations to potentially hire youth once the program ends. The supervisor also shared that she was aware of several colleagues from different locations who were past participants of CPC’s SYEP and WLG programs; one of them even advanced to become a Store Manager.

CPC and I firmly believe that that the WLG program is a vital program for New York City’s youth and young adults. The work-based learning experience allows them to explore their career options in a more intentional way, acts as a critical source of income for themselves and their families, and allows them to begin establishing and growing their professional network.

Therefore, we urge the City to restore $19 million to Work, Learn and Grow, and strongly consider expanding the program to serve more New York City youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

For additional questions, comments, or details, please contact Emmy Lam at elam@cpc-nyc.org or CPC’s Policy & Public Affairs Department at policy@cpc-nyc.org.