



Testimony of

Moira Flavin
Policy Associate for
Early Childhood Education,
Education and Youth Services

Before the
New York City Council
Finance, Youth Services and Community Development Committees

Regarding the
New York City
Fiscal Year 2014 Preliminary Budget

March 6, 2013

Good afternoon. My name is Moira Flavin, and I am the Policy Associate for Early Childhood Education, Education and Youth Services at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc. (CCC). CCC is a 69-year old, independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. CCC is grateful to Chairs Recchia, Jr., Fidler and Vann, and the members of the Finance, Youth Services and Community Development Committees for holding today's hearing on the impact of the FY14 Preliminary Budget on Youth Services.

After-School Programming

New York City's after-school programs include a mix of academic supports, sports, youth development, and recreation. These programs keep elementary, middle and high school students engaged in a wide array of enriching and positive activities during after-school, holiday and summer hours. Youth are at greatest risk for delinquency between the hours of 3-6pm¹ and every \$1 invested in youth services saves \$3 in savings for participants and taxpayers.² Thus, these programs are a win-win for children, families, communities, and taxpayers.

Last year, after the Administration threatened to cut child care and after-school programs for 47,000 children, the City Council restored an unprecedented \$120 million for child care and after-school services. This saved after-school programs for approximately 32,000 children. In addition, the FY13 Budget included \$10 million for summer 2013 programming in Council-funded OST programs. CCC is incredibly grateful for the Council's unprecedented restoration and commitment to children and families. We once again thank you for saving child care and after-school for thousands of children.

Unfortunately, the FY14 Preliminary Budget, which represents Mayor Bloomberg's last chance to stabilize the child care and after-school systems in New York City, fails to do so. Not only does the proposed budget fail to fund any of the City Council's restorations to child care and after-school services, it proposes additional cuts to both systems.

Out-of-School-Time (OST)

In 2005, Mayor Bloomberg created the Out-of-School Time Initiative (OST), with the goals of providing youth with academic enrichment and social, emotional, and leadership development opportunities, as well as supporting working parents by providing safe after-school programming for children. Since the model's inception, CCC has urged the City to make the program available to greater numbers of children.

At its height, OST served 85,000 children. Had it not been for the City Council's restoration of \$50.65 million last year, the OST system would have served only about 27,000 children. CCC appreciates the Council's restoration of funds, which allows the OST system to serve approximately 54,000 youth today.

¹ 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>

² Lattimore, C. B., Mihalic, S. F., Grotper, 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.

Unfortunately, the Preliminary Budget fails to restore the \$50.65 million funded by the City Council, and proposes another \$10 million cut to OST. The additional cut will result in an additional loss of 3,632 slots, 2,250 elementary slots and 1,382 middle school slots.

As you know, it is difficult for New York City's children, parents, and providers to be able to depend on one-year funding from the Council. Thus, CCC is still urging the Mayor to issue an Executive Budget that restores and baselines \$50.65 million from last year's budget, and also rescinds the additional \$10 million cut to OST. Alternatively, CCC will urge the Council to once again work with the Administration to adopt a budget that restores these funds.

Beacons

Beacon Centers are nationally recognized youth development programs that, through collaborations between schools and community-based organizations, provide a broad range of support services to youth and their families. Beacons operate in the afternoons/evenings, on weekends, during school holidays and vacation periods, and during the summer. These school-based community centers offer academic and recreation opportunities for youth and other supportive services to families.

As in years past, the City Council restored \$4.4 million in cuts to Beacon programs citywide in FY13. The Council funds prevented the closure of seven of the city's eighty Beacon programs in July of 2012, and also restored an across-the-board cut to all programs. Given that each Beacon serves over 800 children, the City Council funding preserved services for at least 5,600 children. Unfortunately, as you know, the Mayor's FY14 Preliminary Budget fails to include the \$4.4 million for Beacon programs, meaning the seven programs face closure again this year, and all City-funded programs face cuts. CCC urges the Mayor to issue an Executive Budget that restores and baselines the \$4.4 million for Beacon programs, but if not, we will once again have to return to the Council to seek these restorations.

NYCHA Cornerstone

NYCHA Cornerstone programs, which are located in community centers within New York City Housing Authority complexes, are after-school programs designed to promote high school attendance and graduation for youth living in public housing. The FY14 Preliminary Budget fails to include \$926,000 for Cornerstone programs, restored by the City Council in FY13. Without these funds, 733 youth will lose services provided by Cornerstone programs. CCC appreciates the efforts the City Council took to restore cuts to Cornerstone in FY13, and appeals to the Mayor and the City Council to support NYCHA Cornerstone in FY14.

City Council Youth Initiatives

CCC is grateful to the City Council for its historic support of local youth programs that provide youth with a broad array of neighborhood-based supports. We urge the Council to continue its steadfast support of Council youth initiatives and oppose the proposed cuts to programs such as the YMCA After-School Program, Dropout Prevention Initiative, Sports and Arts in Schools,

NY Junior Tennis League, The After- Three Corporation, and other Councilmember support for youth programs.

Summer Youth Employment

The Department of Youth and Community Development's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) provides New York City youth between the ages of 14 and 24 with valuable summer employment and educational opportunities that support youth for college and career.

Unfortunately, the capacity of SYEP has steadily decreased since 2009, despite continued high demand for participation and rising youth unemployment in New York City. SYEP reduces youth unemployment during the summer and provides families with supplemental income. This is especially important given the fact that 29.8% of New Yorkers lives in poverty,³ and 75% of youth who participated in SYEP last year stated they would not have a job otherwise.⁴ Because of the vital educational and economic benefits SYEP provides participants and communities, CCC believes strongly that the program must be protected and expanded, especially for youth most at risk of becoming disconnected.

In the summer of 2012, 29,416 New York City youth enrolled in SYEP.⁵ However, DYCD received 132,593 applications.⁶ DYCD's data clearly show the decrease in SYEP slots over the past several years and the persistently high number of applications the program receives. Thus, it is evident that SYEP's current capacity is insufficient to meet the demand for the program. CCC urges the Mayor and the City Council to protect and increase SYEP slots so that more youth may have the opportunity to participate.

On a related matter, while CCC is supportive of federal and State proposals to increase the minimum wage, we want to be sure that there is enough SYEP funding available ensure that at least the same number of youth can participate at the higher wage. It is estimated that an additional \$6 million is needed to maintain the same number of participants in New York City if minimum wage is increased to the Governor's proposed \$8.75 an hour.

CCC also remains concerned that the new SYEP RFP reduces the number of youth served, reduces the number of hours/weeks youth can work, and thus reduces the amount of money youth will earn. CCC urges DYCD to once again reconsider these changes.

In addition, since 2010, private funding has supported a portion of SYEP positions. City tax levy contributions to the program have decreased significantly, from \$34.2 million in 2009 to \$20.6 million in 2012⁷. CCC appreciates the City's efforts to seek out private funding to mitigate some of the losses to the program, but we urge the Mayor to put forth an Executive Budget that

³ Keeping Track of New York City's Children 2013. Citizens' Committee for Children.

⁴ DYCD 2012 Annual Summary

http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/downloads/pdf/2012-SYEP_Annual_Summary11-29-2012.pdf

⁵ DYCD 2012 SYEP Annual Summary

http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/downloads/pdf/2012-SYEP_Annual_Summary11-29-2012.pdf

⁶ Ibid

⁷ DYCD 2012 SYEP Annual Summary

http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/downloads/pdf/2012-SYEP_Annual_Summary11-29-2012.pdf

supports SYEP such that there are sufficient slots to meet the demand and ensure the program's funding is stable from year to year.

Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY)

CCC thanks Chair Fidler and the members of the Youth Services committee for their long-standing commitment to fund services for runaway and homeless youth in New York City. Without the City Council and this committee's commitment to RHY, the capacity of the system would decrease. These critical services are a lifeline for youth in New York City, and keep children safe and housed at night.

There are an estimated 3,800 runaway and homeless youth (RHY) in New York City.⁸ These youth, many of whom have been abused, sexually exploited, and/or in contact with the juvenile justice or criminal justice systems, are some of the most vulnerable children in our city. They are critically in need of the broad continuum of essential services for runaway and homeless youth provided by DYCD. These include city-wide street outreach programs that reach at-risk teenagers in areas where they congregate, provide them with information, and offer to transport them to safe environments; drop-in centers in each borough that provide counseling to youth and their families as well as referrals for services; crisis shelter beds that keep runaway and homeless youth safe and off the streets during emergency stays; and longer-term (up to 18 months) transitional independent living programs for youth ages 16 to 24 who have nowhere to live.

While DYCD's services are essential for the youth who use them, we also know that the number of shelter beds available is very small compared to the size of the population. For the 3,800 runaway and homeless youth in New York City, City and State RHY services fund only 253 emergency shelter and transitional independent living beds. Additionally, RHY shelter providers report having to turn away increased numbers of youth due to lack of bed space.

Despite the clear need for RHY services, once again the Mayor's FY14 Preliminary Budget fails to fund the \$7.17 million that the City Council restored to the budget for RHY shelter beds in FY13. RHY services provide an essential lifeline for these young people, and require stable, baselined support. As Commissioner Richter recently explained to the City Council, it is difficult to invest one-year resources in shelter beds. Therefore, CCC urges the Mayor to acknowledge the importance of these shelter beds and put forward an Executive Budget that restores and baselines the full amount of RHY funding. We look forward to working with the City Council to secure restorations at Adoption FY14 if necessary.

In sum, we urge the Mayor and the City Council to protect investments in youth development and employment programming, and programs targeted to runaway and homeless youth. These investments are cost-effective, produce good outcomes for children and youth, and ensure that the City can avoid the fiscal burden of more costly interventions in the short and long term.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

⁸ Freeman, Lance, Darrick Hamilton. Count of Homeless Youth in New York City. Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, 2008. Available at: www.citylimits.org/images_pdfs/pdfs/HomelessYouth.pdf