



**TESTIMONY**  
**BEFORE THE NEW YORK LEGISLATIVE**  
**STANDING COMMITTEES ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**  
**AND EDUCATION**  
**Examining the New York City Administration for Children’s Services’**  
**Plan to Eliminate Kindergarten Services in the Publicly Funded Child Care System**

May 28, 2009

Good afternoon. My name is Andrea Anthony and I am the Executive Director of the Day Care Council of New York, Inc. The Day Care Council of New York is the membership organization for more than 200 nonprofit organizations that sponsor approximately 330 publicly funded child care programs throughout the five boroughs. These private nonprofit organizations are under contract with the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) to provide education and care to infants, toddlers, and young children aged 2.6 to 5 years old. As of April 2009, there were 34,276 young children in center-based programs representing more than 61 percent of the total population of 55,787 children in the publicly-funded system.

I would like to thank the Chair of the Senate Committee on Children and Families, Senator Velmanette Montgomery, the Chair of the Senate Committee on Education, Suzi Oppenheimer, the Chair of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families, William Scarborough, and the Chair of the Assembly Committee on Education, Catherine Nolan for sponsoring this important hearing. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on ACS’ plan to eliminate kindergarten services in the publicly funded child care system.

From its beginnings in 1941, the publicly funded child care system was formed as a partnership between the city and nonprofit organizations with the intent of helping families who need a safe, educational setting for their children while they are working. This goal is still very true today. We are at a critical juncture in the 58 year old history of the publicly funded child care system. Over the past eight years, we have witnessed the elimination of after school services, the refusal of the City to negotiate an equitable and fair labor contract for child care workers, and now the elimination of kindergarten services. All of these decisions have

emanated, in my opinion, from a goal to save money without any regard to the impact on working families, their young children and the dedicated workers in this system.

I would like to focus my comments on three issues: (1) the lack of parental choice in the decision to eliminate kindergarten services in the child care system; (2) the devastating impact on a number of communities that will be affected by the layoffs; and (3) the lack of a city-wide plan for after school services for kindergarten children.

**First, ACS' proposal to eliminate kindergarten services in the publicly funded system takes away the provision of parental choice outlined under the New York State Child Care Block Grant Subsidy Program (NYSCCB).** Parents deemed eligible for subsidized child care have a choice to select their licensed child care provider. For low-income working families, we understand that such a choice and the subsidy are only available if funding is available. However, the parental choice provision specifically states that families who are receiving public assistance are guaranteed child care services. ACS' proposal to eliminate kindergarten services ignores this provision of the NYSCCBG. Allow me to reiterate, a parent receiving public assistance who has been deemed eligible for subsidized child care and whose child will turn five by December 2009 will no longer be able to send their child to a publicly-funded center-based child care program in the City of New York.

**Secondly, when ACS informed us of their initial proposal of closing approximately 125 classrooms serving about 7,200 five year olds, we knew that this translated into a serious loss of capacity throughout the system.** Unfortunately this lost of capacity also translates into major employee layoffs. Each classroom represents three workers: a head teacher, an assistant teacher and a teacher's aid. Eliminating 125 classrooms could mean more than 400 layoffs. In addition to the classroom staff, many agencies will be forced to layoff support staff as well, including assistant cooks and assistant janitors.

Recently, Commissioner John Mattingly informed us that ACS plans to "age down" the system and hopefully, keep 93 classrooms or 2,000 slots. To date, we do not know which child care classroom in which programs will be retained and many of our members are concerned that such information is delayed. We held a meeting with a group of member agency representatives earlier this week who stated that ACS has not informed them of which agencies will be permitted to "age down" and what the plan is for their five year olds in the upcoming summer months.

Keep in mind, although ACS is proposing to maintain 93 classrooms, child care agencies will now have to recruit new children, with limited notice, and may still be forced to layoff staff until these classrooms are filled. It is not clear as of today, which agencies will be spared. Unfortunately, we may still see about 100 layoffs in one of the worse economic climates in the City.

This unresolved issue brings me to our final concern which is **the lack of a city-wide plan for after-school services for the approximate 3,000 kindergarten children who will be attending public school this fall.** In late January of this year, we surveyed our membership on the kindergarten proposal. The survey responses revealed two pressing concerns: (1) parents had limited public school options in their neighborhood to transfer their children; and (2) for many, an after school program did not exist in their neighborhood. As you know, ACS eliminated after school services in the contracted child care system six years ago. Now we are confronted with the need for such services for five year old children.

I have attached to my testimony two letters; one from a director and the other from a parent that clearly highlights their frustration and fear over the kindergarten proposal. In addition, I have attached copies of our surveys from a director in the Bronx and Brooklyn which states that their agency does not operate an after school program nor is there such a service in their area.

There are a number of questions that are being ignored as ACS moves forward on eliminating kindergarten services, such as, what is going to happen to those children that cannot enroll at their local public school? What happens if an after school program does not exist in their area? How are parents going to pay for their child to get from school to an after school provider in the middle of the work day? Who is going to pay for a chaperone? I think you would agree that these questions demand concrete answers.

Finally, I would urge you to require ACS to work closely with the Department of Youth and Community Development and the Department of Health on any major changes in the child care system and it's rippling affect. The kindergarten proposal will force some agencies to "age down" to remain open which may change their licensed capacity. This issue needs to be discussed with DOH. Transferring more than 3,000 young children to the public system without an after school plan that is coordinated with DYCD is exceptionally poor planning. These three

city agencies, ACS, DYCD and DOH must work together on any and all proposals that force a drastic change within the child care system. If the kindergarten proposal is passed, we would strongly urge that ACS is given the necessary support to maintain capacity by increasing the number of three and four year olds served, but also infant and toddlers. Funding is desperately needed to serve infant and toddlers and to recruit the labor force necessary to provide educational services to our children.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on this issue.