



Main Office
2082 Lexington Avenue, Suite 204
New York, NY 10035

t: 212.206.7818
f: 212.206.7836

info@dccnyinc.org
www.dccnyinc.org

Queens Office
James C. Hall, Jr.
Family Child Care Network
York College
94-20 Guy Brewer Boulevard, Room 2F01E
Jamaica, NY 11451

t: 718.262.2247

TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION JOINTLY WITH
THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH
OCTOBER 16, 2020

My name is Lisa Caswell and I am the Senior Policy Analyst for the Day Care Council of New York. We would like to take this opportunity to again thank the City Council for its strong voice in last year's battle for salary parity. It has been a silver lining throughout the pandemic, giving Day Care Council members much needed strength to support thousands of children and families in crisis. We would also like to acknowledge the Mayor's continuing commitment to funding the system as it transits through different learning models. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the quality of administrative oversight being provided by the Department of Education's (DOE) Division of Early Education. Their guidance reflects high levels of interdepartmental collaboration, making it possible for our members to access resources and maintain critical safety standards in a constantly shifting environment.

In recent weeks we have witnessed the targeted and immediate response to a child's positive COVID-19 test result in one of our member agency's centers. With safety measures and protocols firmly in place, our members have increased confidence in their ability to manage risk. This does not mean that our members are not facing hiring challenges as they manage employee grant requests for medical accommodation. Day Care Council members are also facing a backlog in comprehensive background check clearances which may take months to resolve at a time when we need to increase the number of staff to lower class size.

Additionally, some members are losing children as parents return to full-time work outside the home because their site does not have the available space or staff to offer five full days of supervised learning to all families that want it. Even child care programs that have agreed to run full day on-site Learning Bridges programs cannot refer their children to these programs because the seats are reserved for children attending UPK in public schools. This issue is impacting enrollment now and we expect that it will become a serious impediment for parents going forward.

Fortunately, the DOE has assured child care providers that their funding will remain stable throughout the City's recovery process, despite fluctuations in enrollment.

Finally, as members of the Steering Committee for the Campaign for Children, we have been advocating for a more substantial role on behalf of child care and youth service systems. Our expertise in human services and education should put us at the center of decision making. Instead, we are often brought together for our initial input but are not consulted again until new initiatives are announced. A clear example is the closing of the Regional Enrichment Centers (RECs). This vital service was eliminated in anticipation of schools reopening and was replaced with Learning Bridges. We must be fully engaged in the entire process including program development, process, and implementation. This will be particularly important if we need to manage limited funding going forward.

Thank you for your time. We greatly appreciate your long-standing support of the City's early childhood education system and welcome all opportunities for continuing collaboration.