



Testimony of Day Care Council of New York  
Before the New York City Council Committee on Education  
Honorable Mark Treyger, Chair

Oversight: Impact of COVID-19 on Student Learning and Academic Achievement.

January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Good Afternoon chair Treyger and members of the Committee on Education and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Gregory Brender and I am here on behalf of the Day Care Council of New York. For more than 70 years, the Day Care Council has successfully served the needs of non-profit organizations sponsoring early childhood education programs across the five boroughs of New York City. Our 93 members currently operate more than 216 programs, most of which are under contract with the Department of Education.

As early childhood educators, Day Care Council members engage families at the crucial earliest stages of their child's development. The first years of a child's life are the only opportunity to provide them with the social-emotional development and early skills development that supports them throughout their education and throughout their lives. As such, Day Care Council and its network of community based early childhood educators have long recognized that access to strong and stable early childhood education programs has profound affects on students learning and academic achievements.

However, the rapid changes to program and funding models that effectively responding to COVID-19 requires is unprecedented. The pandemic continually increases the demands on community based early childhood education programs in responding to community needs at the same time that it presents meaningful threats to the stability and viability of many longstanding early childhood education providers.

Throughout the pandemic, Day Care Council members and other community based early childhood education providers have:

- **Launched Emergency Child Care Centers:** Community based organizations working with contracts through Department of Education 46 center-based Emergency Child Care

Center Based child care programs and 72 Family Child Care Emergency Child Care programs. The Emergency Child Care Centers operated similarly to the Regional Enrichment Centers in public school building serving the children 5 years and under of essential workers.

- **Developed Remote Programming Options:** Starting in March of 2020, early childhood education programs offered remote classes and engagement. This involved developing new ways to conduct classes online for very young children and providing support to families to help them support their children in accessing remote programming.
- **Opened 5 – Day Per Week Programs.** In September 2020, as public schools including public school Pre-K for All and 3-K for All programs opened using a hybrid model with the week divided between in person and remote education, CBO early childhood education programs operating with DOE contracts opened 5 day per week programs to meet the needs of working parents.
- **Opening Learning Bridges.** CBO’s also opened Learning Bridges programs to provide child care during hybrid learning days to 3 and 4 year old children of essential workers.

Despite this innovative work and the recognition of child care workers as essential workers, New York City’s child care system desperately needs increased investment in order to ensure that young children will have access to high quality early childhood education.

Early childhood education programs face instability and are struggling to keep their doors open. Many child care programs that are funded through private pay or through vouchers have already closed due to the financial instability of the pandemic. We expect to see the loss of more publicly funded programs in September as new procurements for DOE contracted child care programs go into effect.

A strong child care systems is crucial to ensuring that the COVID-19 pandemic does not hinder the next generation of students in New York City. In order to stabilize the child care sector Day Care Council of New York makes the following recommendations:

### **Continue to Pay the Full Value of Early Childhood Contracts Based on Capacity Not Enrollment**

Enrollment in ECE programs has been volatile through the pandemic and will likely continue to be so as necessary changes are made in how New York City’s economy reopens. Parents who are currently working from home or unemployed due to the pandemic are waiting until further reopening to re-enroll their children.

Moreover, during the pandemic, Department of Education’s Centralized Enrollment System has been experiencing significant backlogs leading to months long wait times for families who have applied for child care. Under the Centralized Enrollment System, parents must apply through Department of Education to enroll their child in a community based program even if that family

has a longstanding relationship with that provider such as having an older sibling already enrolled.

For these reasons, current enrollment does not reflect need. As workplaces reopen, parents need to be able to quickly obtain safe, affordable child care for their children. To fill this need, providers must be able to maintain their staff and infrastructure to facilitate a more comprehensive reopening as more parents return to work.

Therefore, Day Care Council urges New York City to maintain funding for contracted center based and Family Child Care programs at capacity throughout the pandemic.

### **Guarantee Equity in Access to Health and Safety**

The City must ensure that children, teachers and staff members in community based early childhood education programs have equal access to health and safety measures as their counterparts in public schools. This includes:

- Access to on-site nurses;
- Professional cleaning
- Training around health and safety protocols;
- Incentive pay for staff who put their own health at risk to keep programs open.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. We greatly appreciate the City Council's work to support early childhood educators and welcome the opportunity for further collaboration. I can be reached for any question at [gbrender@dccnyinc.org](mailto:gbrender@dccnyinc.org).