



**Testimony of Day Care Council of New York
Before the New York City Council
Committee on Education
Honorable Rita Joseph, Chair**

Oversight- Child Care Center Closures

February 20, 2025

Thank you, Chair Joseph and members of the City Council Committee on Education, for convening this important hearing and for the opportunity to testify. For the early childhood education workforce and families in New York City, this is a matter of utmost urgency. The livelihoods of many hardworking educators, staff and directors are at risk and families are uncertain whether the programs they have come to depend upon will remain open.

The Day Care Council of New York (DCCNY) is the membership organization of early care and education providers across New York City. DCCNY works towards a future where all children have access to quality early childhood education and where early childhood providers and their workforce have the tools and resources necessary to offer the highest quality early childhood education.

DCCNY supports its member organizations and New York City's early childhood field through policy research and advocacy, labor relations and mediation, professional development and training for early childhood educators, directors and staff and referral services for parents looking to find child care. DCCNY member organizations provide quality early care and education at more than 200 sites in neighborhoods across all five boroughs.

Most DCCNY member organizations operate with contracts with New York City Public Schools (NYCPS). Many also work with federally funded Head Start contracts or through private funding. DCCNY member organizations employ over 4,000 New Yorkers— the majority of whom are Black and Brown women.

City-Owned Lease Sites

In mid-January of this year, parents of children enrolled in five early childhood education programs started trying to enroll their children for the next school year and through the MySchools Portal. Some parents found that their centers were not listed.

After parents began reporting this to the centers, the centers learned that the City planned to close these programs and terminate the leases that it held with landlords for these sites. Some centers were unaware that the City planned to terminate their City-Owned Leases and, in

essence, close their programs until families seeking to enroll their children inquired as to why their centers were missing from the MySchools Portal.

This was surprising to families and to staff members. These centers were longstanding community institutions serving high-needs neighborhoods and they were respected for their quality. Governor Kathy Hochul had visited one of the sites, 319 Stanhope Street, which is part of Grand Street Settlement, just a week earlier on January 7th highlighting it as an example of the kind of service that needs to be expanded throughout the State.

Since this surprising revelation, providers have been engaged with parents in their community and with NYCPS to preserve their programs and ensure the continued availability of services for their communities. DCCNY is grateful for the engagement of many City, State and Federal elected officials who have met with families and spoken up on behalf of these centers.

DCCNY is excited that significant progress has been made including the Mayor's February 14th statement that the City was "heading to a positive outcome"¹. However, it currently appears that these centers may have only month-to-month leases and will be responsible for higher enrollment requirements than other centers. The families depending on these centers as well as the workforce who supports them should not face further instability.

This process has been emblematic of systems in city contracting that do not take into account the New Yorkers being served or the workforce in the programs. The way that this has been handled speaks to the devaluation of the early childhood education sector.

The City should develop better processes that treat the non-profit organizations and small business providers in the early childhood education sector with respect and humanity.

DCCNY urges the City to work with the centers and with their local elected officials to ensure that the programs remain open

Early Childhood Education and the FY 2026 Budget

Mayor Adams stood in front of a banner that said, "Making NYC the Best Place to Raise Family" when he gave his State of the City speech. However, just days later he released a budget that will make it harder for New Yorkers to raise their families by imperiling the stability and availability of high-quality early childhood education.

The FY 2026 Budget is a dangerous moment for New York City's early childhood education system. Without major changes, this budget will force the closure of many more early childhood education centers. This will leave many New York City families without access to child care and contribute to the exodus of working families out of New York City.

DCCNY urges the City to make the following changes to the Mayor's Preliminary Budget.

1. Keep the Promise of 3-K for All

¹ Cayla Bamberger. *Five NYC Child Care Centers Facing Closure will Stay Open at Least Another Year*. New York Daily News. February 14th, 2025

Mayor Adams has repeatedly promised that every family who wants a 3-K seat will get one. However, the Mayor's Budget cuts \$112 million from 3-K and the City has not provided adequate data showing how this drastic cut is justified.

DCCNY urges the City to:

- Commit to current 3-K funding including the full number of seats and programs in School Year 2024-2025 in the Mayor's Executive Budget. A restoration in the Executive Budget rather than at the time of budget adoption will allow NYCPS time to work with community-based organizations to ensure that programs can open in September.
- Restore the timeline for 3-K expansion so that the City can achieve true universal access in every neighborhood

2. Improve enrollment procedures so families can more easily access early childhood education

Many families continue to struggle to access early childhood education programs leaving seats vacant and families without access to early care and education that meets their needs.

DCCNY urges the City to take the following immediate steps to improve families' access to early care and education.

- Invest in a linguistically and culturally appropriate on-the-ground and multimedia marketing, community engagement and enrollment efforts for 3-K.
- Allow community-based enrollment where families can apply for a seat at the center of their choosing. Many families are more comfortable with a trusted community-based organization.
- Implement Presumptive Eligibility which allows a family who is likely to be eligible for child care assistance to enroll in an Extended Day/ Extended Year program or receive a voucher while their eligibility is being determined. Eligibility determinations can take months and legislation enacted in December 2024 allows the City to utilize State and Federal funds to serve presumptively eligible families for the first time.

3. Restore and baseline School Day Plus

The School Day Plus pilot launched by the City Council supports a longer day and year in 77 community-based organizations working with School Day/ Year contracts. Because School Day Plus does not utilize the Federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) School Day Plus does not have the strict eligibility requirements of Extended Day/ Extended Year programs.

This flexibility that School Day Plus offers empowers providers to respond to changing demographics in the neighborhoods that they serve.

DCCNY urges the City to restore and baseline \$25 million for School Day Plus.

4. Restore and baseline Promise NYC:

Promise NYC expands access to Child Care Assistance to families who continue to be denied access due to discriminatory immigration status requirements. Promise NYC funds child care for families who otherwise would be denied and partners with community-based organizations to ensure that families can access the funding.

It is not just an important investment but also a statement of the City's values showing a commitment to ending discrimination and expanding access to education.

DCCNY urges the City to restore and baseline \$25 million for Promise NYC.

5. Invest in the early childhood education workforce

DCCNY is proud to have worked with our partners in organized labor to settle collective bargaining agreements that increase salaries for the teachers, staff and directors working in many city-contracted centers based early childhood education programs. However, the biggest threat to the viability of the early childhood education system remains the inadequate salaries paid to the early childhood education workforce.

In almost every type of early childhood education program, the workforce is underpaid and underappreciated. The early childhood education workforce is overwhelmingly women and here in New York City, it is overwhelmingly women of color. Yet, teachers, staff, directors and providers continue to earn significantly less than their counterparts in public schools.

The City must take further action to eliminate these salary and benefit disparities that continue to drive talented educators, directors and support staff out of early childhood education programs.

DCCNY urges the City to:

- Expedite the payment of collectively bargained salary increases to child care centers so they can start paying their staff increased salaries
- Identify new resources to increase pay for the early care and education workforce.

DCCNY is grateful that the City Council Education Committee is having this important hearing when so much is at stake for early childhood education providers and New York City's families.