



**Testimony of Day Care Council of New York
Before the New York City Council
Committee on Children and Youth
Preliminary Budget Hearing
Honorable Althea Stevens, Chair**

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Thank you, Chair Stevens and members of the City Council Committee on Children and Youth for convening this important hearing and for the opportunity to testify. We appreciate that the City Council takes the time to hear from New Yorkers about the budget. It is a crucial conversation this year as the future of early childhood education, the availability of early childhood education programs in many underserved neighborhoods, and the livelihoods of countless hardworking and talented members of the early childhood education workforce are at stake.

The Day Care Council of New York (DCCNY) is the membership organization of early care and education providers across New York City. DCCNY works toward 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 the early childhood workforce, 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 New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) contracts. Many also work with federally-funded Head Start contracts, child care assistance vouchers, or private funding. DCCNY member organizations employ over 4,000 New Yorkers – the majority of whom are Black and Brown women.

Families Losing Child Care Assistance

In February, ACS reported to advocates and New York State legislators that the City is

set to exhaust its funding under the State's Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). New York State distributes funds from the Federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) through the CCAP program to New York City and all other parts of the State.

ACS has stated that without additional funding for CCAP, it will be forced to turn away families eligible for child care assistance and deny recertification to families already receiving vouchers. This may result in between 4,000 and 7,000 families a month being denied recertification and thousands of other eligible families being turned away when they initially apply for child care assistance.

ACS has estimated a total need of approximately \$2.006 billion which is \$987 million more than New York State Office of Children and Family Services has designated for New York City.

The families who will lose care if action is not taken are working families with low incomes who earn under 85% of State Median Income (\$108,000 annually for a family of four). Under State and Federal law, low-income working families are eligible for child care assistance but are not guaranteed child care.

DCCNY has communicated to state leaders the urgency of New York State increasing its investment in CCAP. DCCNY is working with ACS and our allies across the State to urge the Governor and Legislature to fully fund CCAP. This will prevent families in New York City and throughout the rest of the State from losing access to Child Care Assistance.

The City must also take action to prevent this crisis, including investing its own funds. Both the City and the State must work together and make the investments needed to ensure that families can access Child Care Assistance.

Cuts to Early Childhood Education in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget

On top of the aforementioned issues, Mayor Adams's Preliminary Budget Proposal cuts \$222 million from early childhood education programs. If enacted, these cuts will devastate families and the early childhood education providers who serve them.

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

1. Keep the Promise of 3-K for All

Mayor Adams has repeatedly promised that every family who wants a 3-K seat will get one. However, his budget cuts \$112 million from 3-K, and the City has not provided adequate data showing why these drastic cuts are 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. Also, the City must invest at least the \$112 million eliminated in the Mayor’s Preliminary Budget Proposal. 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. 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/School Year contracts. Because School Day Plus does not utilize the Federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), it does not have the strict eligibility requirements of Extended Day/Extended Year programs.

School Day Plus's flexibility empowers providers to respond to changing demographics in the neighborhoods they serve.

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

3. Restore and baseline Promise NYC

Promise NYC expands access to Child Care Assistance for families who otherwise would be denied and partners with community-based organizations to ensure that families can access the funding.

It is an important investment and 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.

4. Restore and baseline Preschool Special Education

Preschool Special Education programs address the needs of children with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), which lay out the special education instruction, supports, and services a student needs to thrive in school. Despite the increased need

for Preschool Special Education programs, the Mayor's budget eliminates \$55 million for Preschool Special Education programs.

DCCNY urges the City to restore and baseline this crucial funding.

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 early childhood workforce in many city-contracted center-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 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.

6. 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 linguistically and culturally appropriate 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 offer presumptive eligibility for families for the first time.

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