



**Testimony of Day Care Council of New York
Before the New York City Council
Committee on Education
Honorable Rita Joseph, Chair
At the FY 2026 Executive Budget Hearing**

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Thank you Chair Joseph and members of the City Council Committee on Education for the opportunity to testify. families. DCCNY appreciates the City Council's leadership in efforts to stabilize and expand access to early childhood education.

The Day Care Council of New York (DCCNY) is the membership organization of early care and education providers across New York City. DCCNY sees 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 at large 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 early care and education at over 200 sites in neighborhoods across all five boroughs.

Most DCCNY member organizations operate with contracts with the New York City Public Schools, while a smaller portion work with child care vouchers issued by ACS and HRA, federally funded Head Start contracts or through private funding. DCCNY member organizations seek to provide quality early care and education services to New York's children and families across all five boroughs. DCCNY member organizations employ over 4,000 New Yorkers – the majority of whom are Black and Brown women.

Baselined Funds in the FY 2026 Budget

DCCNY has long advocated for baselined funding for early childhood education. The annual budget dance where key services such as 3-K and Preschool Special Education were cut in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget and then restored in the Adopted Budget in July had an impact on providers and their workforce.

Programs often had to prepare for closure only to have to hastily make plans to stay open when funding was restored. This created instability for the workforce. We appreciate that many core pieces of funding for early childhood education were baselined or restored in the Executive Budget, including:

Key Baseline Investments:

- \$112 million for 3-K programs (previously slated for cuts)
- \$55 million for Preschool Special Education (previously slated for cuts)
- \$25 million for School Day Plus pilot program (extending hours at centers with School Day/Year contracts)

One-Year Funding Restorations:

- \$5 million for early childhood education outreach
- \$4 million for ECE outreach targeting immigrant families
- \$25 million for Promise NYC

The Staffing Crisis in Community Based Early Childhood Education Programs

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 workforce.

In 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.

This means that people who have the skills, knowledge and education to be great early childhood educators often cannot and do not stay in their roles because they cannot sustain their lives with lower salaries.

This situation presents a significant challenge to community-based early childhood education programs, especially in the upcoming school year. The New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) plans to hire 3,700 additional teachers for the K-12 system to comply with New York State's class size reduction law. This large-scale recruitment effort will likely intensify competition for qualified teaching staff.

It is very likely that intentionally or not, NYCPS will recruit teachers, staff and directors away from the child care centers working under contracts with NYCPS. Child care centers are strictly regulated, and the NYC Department of Health requires that they maintain ratios of adults to children and ensure that qualified staff are on site at all times. Centers will not be able to operate if they are understaffed and may be forced to reduce capacity or even close.

The City must take further action to eliminate the 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to take any questions and can be reached at gbrender@dccnyinc.org.