



**Testimony of the Day Care Council of New York
Before the New York City Council Subcommittee on Early Childhood Education
Oversight Hearing on 2-K in New York City
October 7, 2026**

Chair Gutierrez and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the expansion of 2-K in New York City.

I am Tara Gardner, the Executive Director of the Day Care Council of New York (DCCNY). DCCNY represents nearly 140 nonprofit organizations that operate publicly-funded child care and early childhood education programs throughout the five boroughs. Our members have decades of experience educating New York City's youngest children, supporting working families, and responding to the needs of the neighborhoods they serve.

DCCNY is committed to expanding access to high-quality early childhood education, especially for families contending with significant need. As the City expands its 2-K program, though, we must ensure that organizations operating those seats have the funding, workforce, contracts, and program models necessary to sustain them.

Community-based organizations are ready to be partners in this expansion. In DCCNY's 2026 conversations with providers, **87% expressed interest in participating in 2-K.**

At the same time, providers have repeatedly cautioned that the existing early childhood system must be stabilized. In DCCNY's provider discussions, organizations raised meaningful concerns about their ability to staff programs and receive on-time payments.

Those concerns reflect conditions providers are already experiencing. **74% of our providers described recruiting staff as difficult or very difficult**, and more than 80% of respondents cited issues with low compensation, longer days and year-round operations, and competition from public schools. Providers noted that these setbacks contributed to significant turnover among early-career staff.

Nearly all respondents also reported rising operating costs, and many described how the City's delayed payments threatened their ability to operate.

These challenges are interconnected. Low contract funding creates compensation gaps. Those gaps lead to more staff vacancies, which constrain enrollment and expansion. When coupled

with administrative and payment delays, providers are severely strained in their ability to operate.

For 2-K to grow successfully, the City must learn from seasoned program operators as it designs the next phase of implementation. That means ensuring that the 2-K expansion is supported by several core policy conditions:

- Contracts and reimbursement levels must reflect the true cost of serving two-year-olds.
- Contracts, advances, and payments must be remitted early enough for providers to hire staff, prepare classrooms, and make necessary investments before children arrive.
- Expansion must make use of existing provider capacity, including currently under-enrolled sites and available classrooms that accommodate 2-K programming.
- Workforce investments must be sufficient to support the existing workforce and staff new classrooms.
- Programs must have adequate resources, staffing, and support to serve children with disabilities and developmental needs.

As New York City builds 2-K, the goal must involve strengthening the infrastructure to support providers. Expansion must address the systemic and longstanding workforce, contracting, payment, and funding challenges that make it difficult, almost impossible, to operate stable and high-quality programs in NYC.

DCCNY looks forward to working with the Council, the Administration, NYC Public Schools, ACS, and providers across the city to ensure that 2-K evolves into a program that provides meaningful access for families while creating sustainable infrastructure for the organizations and educators responsible for delivering it.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.