



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

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Thank you, Chair Joseph and members of the New York City Council Committee on Education, 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, and professional development and training for early childhood educators, directors and staff. We also offer 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. They employ over 4,000 New Yorkers, the majority of whom are Black and Brown women, and operate with New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) contracts, federally funded Head Start contracts, child care assistance vouchers and private funding.

Early Childhood Education and the FY 2026 Budget

Mayor Adams's Preliminary Budget Proposal cuts \$222 million from early childhood education programs. Cuts happening at the same time that:

- Families are leaving the City because they cannot afford early childhood education.

- Early Childhood Education providers are losing teachers, staff, and directors because of inadequate salaries and benefits.
- ACS reports a nearly \$2 billion deficit in its voucher program, increasing the need for the services child care centers and family child care programs provide as part of the NYCPS contracted system.

New York City must not enact these drastic cuts to early childhood education programs. 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, the Mayor's Preliminary Budget Proposal cuts \$112 million from 3-K, and the City has not provided adequate data showing the justification for this drastic cut.

DCCNY urges the City to:

- Include the full funding for the current 3-K program in the Mayor's Executive Budget for School Year 2024-2025, maintaining the complete number of seats and programs. Minimally, we call on the City to reinstate the \$112 million cut in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget Proposal. Restoring this funding in the Executive Budget, rather than at budget adoption, will give NYCPS sufficient time to collaborate with community-based organizations and ensure all programs can open as scheduled 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), School Day Plus does not have the strict eligibility requirements of Extended Day/Extended Year programs.

The 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.

3. 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 all NYC families can access these vouchers.

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, as many children whose first years were spent in isolation due to COVID-19 are entering preschool programs and have increased needs for additional emotional and developmental support, 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 teachers, staff, and directors working 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 its workforce.

In almost every early childhood education program type, the workforce is underpaid and underappreciated. The early childhood education workforce is overwhelmingly comprised of women; here in New York City, it is overwhelmingly comprised of 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 salary and benefit disparities that continue to drive talented educators, directors, and support staff out of center-based early childhood education programs.

DCCNY urges the City to:

- Expedite the payment of collectively-bargained salary increases to early childhood education centers so they can pay the 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

Accessing early childhood education programs remains a struggle for too many families, leaving them without access to care that meets their needs, and too many seats unfilled.

DCCNY urges the City to improve families' access to early care and education immediately by:

- Investing in linguistically and culturally appropriate marketing, community engagement, and enrollment efforts for 3-K.
- Allowing community-based enrollment where families can apply for a seat at the center of their choosing, as many families are more comfortable with a trusted community-based organization.
- Implementing Presumptive Eligibility which allows families who are likely eligible for child care assistance to immediately enroll in an Extended Day/Extended Year program or receive a voucher while their official eligibility is still being processed. Since eligibility determinations can take months, new legislation from December 2024 permits the City to use State and Federal funds to serve these presumptively eligible families for the first time

DCCNY is grateful that the New York 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. We look forward to working with the City Council and the Administration to realize a City Budget that preserves and strengthens early childhood education in New York City.