



**Testimony of FPWA**

**Presented to:  
New York City Council  
Committee on Education  
Preliminary Budget Hearing  
Hon. Chair Rita Joseph  
March 18, 2024**

**Jennifer Jones Austin  
Executive Director/CEO**

**Prepared By:  
Brad Martin, Senior Fiscal Policy Officer**

40 Broad Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, New York 10004  
Phone: (212) 777-4800  
Fax: (212) 414-1328

We are grateful to the Council Education Committee for holding this hearing, and to Chair Joseph for the opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of FPWA (Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies) regarding Education in New York City.

FPWA is an anti-poverty policy and advocacy organization committed to advancing economic opportunity, justice, and upward mobility for New Yorkers with low incomes. Since 1922, FPWA has driven groundbreaking policy reforms to better serve those in need. We work to dismantle the systemic barriers that impede economic security and well-being, and we strengthen the capacity of human services agencies and faith organizations so New Yorkers with lower incomes can thrive and live with dignity.

FPWA has a membership network of more than 170 faith and community-based organizations. We support our members by offering workshops and trainings on topics such as leadership development, organizational management, and trauma-informed approaches to service delivery.

We are deeply committed to economic security and mobility for all New Yorkers. It is well known that education is a key factor in that mobility. We provide direct funding for Educational Opportunity Scholarships, just one of the many efforts at FPWA that advances economic equity by helping advance education for our city's youth.

### **We call on elected leaders to take immediate action to sustain critical education funding**

Over the last few years, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) benefitted from more than \$7 billion in federal stimulus funding. NYCPS used this influx of funding not only to help address temporary pandemic-related challenges, but also to launch and expand a range of essential programs to meet needs that existed long before the pandemic—but had gone unmet or under-funded—and that will remain long after the federal COVID-19 relief funds expire. Services paid for by this funding that are now at risk include:

- \$456 million for 3-K, allowing the city to guarantee a seat for every three-year-old in 12 of the City's 32 community school districts and doubling the number of children participating in this early learning program from 17,500 in 2019-20 to 35,700 in 2022-23.
- \$96 million for preschool special education, helping the city address the significant shortage of legally-required preschool special education classes, helping programs recruit and retain certified special education teachers, and adding service providers and staff to help with the development of service plans.
- \$67 million to hire 450 school social workers, allowing nearly 194,000 students to gain access to a social worker; even with this investment, there is only one school social worker for every 435 students enrolled in NYCPS schools and more than 240,000 students do not have access to a full-time social worker.
- \$65 million for school nurses, enabling every school building to have a nurse; prior to the pandemic, at least 137 schools serving a combined 70,000 students did not have a school nurse.

- \$55 million to expand community schools, increasing the number of schools that provide students and their families with wrap-around supports from 266 in 2020-21 to more than 400.
- \$12 million for restorative justice practices, allowing more schools to use alternatives to exclusionary discipline that keep students in the classroom while helping them build and repair relationships; this federal funding represents the majority of the city’s investment in restorative justice.
- \$10 million to hire 60 school psychologists and 15 family workers to address delays in the evaluation process for students with disabilities.
- \$10 million to hire bilingual staff to support the education of English Language Learners, only 46% of whom graduated from high school in four years even before the pandemic.
- \$9 million for shelter-based coordinators to help children who are homeless get to school every day and access needed educational support.
- \$7 million for literacy instruction and dyslexia programming, helping to support screening, new specialized programs for students with dyslexia, and targeted reading interventions in dozens of schools.
- \$7 million for translation and interpretation services, which are particularly vital at a time when more than 40% of students speak a language other than English at home and when the need has grown.
- \$3.3 million for Student Success Centers in 34 high schools, where trained youth leaders build a culture of college-going in their schools and help their peers with the college admissions process.

The impending expiration of federal COVID-19 funds not only threatens the continuation of these newly-launched and expanded programs; temporary federal funds have also been used to stave off more drastic budget cuts at schools that have seen enrollment declines (\$160M in FY 24) and to maintain longstanding initiatives jeopardized by pandemic-related fiscal challenges. As just one example, NYCPS is using: \$33M in federal COVID-19 funding for Learning to Work—which provides support to over-age, under-credited students to help them earn a high school diploma and develop a postsecondary plan—representing more than 70% of the program’s total budget.

This summary does not reflect every investment DoE has made using temporary federal stimulus dollars, but it underscores the enormously high stakes for students—especially those whose needs have too often been overlooked—as well as the urgent need for elected leaders to act before this funding runs dry.

We are at a critical juncture. Our elected leaders must choose between allowing these programs to end on their watch—dealing a massive setback to public education—or taking action to identify new funding sources so students can continue receiving critical supports and services.

We have long been sounding the alarm about the impact of expiring COVID-19 funding through our sustained work tracking federal funding, including through our newly launched [NYC Funds Tracker](#).

We are disappointed that the city failed to heed these warnings and now faces a fiscal cliff for key education programs.

This also reflects longer term trends in the city, as highlighted in our [NYC Funds Tracker Report](#), which has seen investment in the Department of Education lag when compared to other agencies over the past 10 years.

Many of these programs provide targeted support to students from families with low incomes and are vital for the economic mobility that FPWA and our members strive for.

We are counting on our elected leaders to sustain essential education programs and build on the progress made, leaving a lasting impact on the lives of students for years to come.

### **Disparities between pay and conditions for city-run and CBO early childhood workers must be addressed**

Many of the programs above are run in partnership between DoE and contracted CBOs. This is particularly evident in 3k and pre-k, with CBO-run NYC Early Education Centers (NYCEECs) complementing city-run places, with CBOs providing about half of all places available in the city<sup>1</sup>. Under these contracts, CBOs are required to hire teachers based on qualifications in DOE's *Birth-to-Five Policy Handbook*. Despite the primary goal of the city to hold all programs to the same standard, there is a salary disparity between CBO teachers and their public school counterparts<sup>2</sup>. This disparity threatens both the quality of these programs and has also led to a staffing crisis for CBOs which threatens the viability of community-based early childhood programs.

A September 2023 report by the City Council's Black, Latino and Asian Caucus and the Day Care Council of New York estimates that a teacher with a BA degree who chooses to work for a CBO stands to earn \$700,000 less, and one with an MA degree stands to earn \$1.7 million less, than a DOE employed teacher over the course of a 25-year career. This impacts the competitiveness of CBOs and their ability to attract and keep well-qualified teaching staff.<sup>3</sup>

While we celebrated the recent announcement that contracted non-profit workers will see a 9.27% increase in wages over the next three years, more needs to be done to ensure parity between contracted education workers and those employed directly by the city. Despite it being a hard-fought, landmark decision for contracted workers, it still provides less stability than the deal the city reached with UFT last year, which locked in salary increases for the next 5 years, nor does it make up any ground on the pay gap that currently exists. Both workforces are dedicated and provide tremendous value to our city and our children, and both deserve to be paid accordingly and

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.dccnyinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/DCCNY\\_SalaryParityReport2019.pdf](https://www.dccnyinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/DCCNY_SalaryParityReport2019.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.dccnyinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/DCCNY\\_SalaryParityReport2019.pdf](https://www.dccnyinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/DCCNY_SalaryParityReport2019.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/review-of-salaries-paid-to-certified-early-childhood-teachers-hired-by-community-based-organizations/>

equally. Based on the findings of a recent Comptroller's report we support the recommendations for DoE to:

1. Ensure that all certified lead teachers employed by CBOs who earned below the salaries promised to them in 2019 receive retroactive salary adjustments for the period from October 1, 2021, to the present.
2. Tighten contract language to ensure CBOs pay their certified teachers in line with funding provided by DOE.
3. Provide for true pay parity between certified early childhood teachers employed by CBOs and DOE in the future, by accounting for not only educational qualifications, but also for teaching experience and collective bargaining agreements which provide for increases, longevity, and COLA.
4. Ensure that any future promises of pay parity include a definition of pay parity, and that pay policies which fully implement promises are established.
5. Create a system to track the experience of certified lead teachers at CBOs and their union affiliations in future.

**Moving forward, we call for better planning and partnership from the City**

Thank you for your time and attention to these critical issues. FPWA looks forward to working with you to ensure the future of these vital programs is secure in the FY25 budget, particularly for those children from families with low-incomes,

We also look forward to working with you to help strengthen the partnership between the city and CBOs. The high-quality early education programs these organizations provide promote the cognitive and social development of NYC's children and support families outside of the classroom with wraparound services. The sector, and its workforce is vital for our city, we call on the city to ensure the way that CBOs are treated reflects this.