



Advocates for Children
of New York
Protecting every child's right to learn



For Immediate Release

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AS HOMELESSNESS CRISIS CONTINUES, CITY COUNCILMEMBERS JOIN ADVOCATES TO DEMAND INCREASED SUPPORT IN CITY SCHOOLS FOR STUDENTS LIVING IN SHELTERS

Councilmembers Mark Treyger and Stephen Levin, General Welfare Chair, Join President & CEO of Win Christine C. Quinn, Citizens' Committee for Children and Advocates for Children in Push for NYC to Double the Number of Social Workers in City Schools Who Work with Homeless Students

Mayor de Blasio's Executive Budget Proposal Would Add Only 10 'Bridging the Gap' Social Workers, for a Total of 53 Social Workers Citywide

May 24, 2018 (NEW YORK CITY) — Today, Advocates for Children of New York (AFC) joined Christine C. Quinn, President & CEO of Win, New York's largest provider of shelter services for homeless women and their families, Citizens' Committee for Children (CCC), and Councilmembers Mark Treyger and Stephen Levin at New York City Hall to advocate for increased funding to double the number of social workers in schools with the highest concentration of homeless students. Almost 40,000 New York City students lived in shelter during the 2016-2017 school year and advocates are calling on the city to nearly double the number of "Bridging the Gap" social workers to 100, projected to cost an estimated \$7 million in next year's budget.

The press conference follows the release of an AFC report, *Gaps in Social Workers for Students Living in Shelters*, finding that many New York City schools with high concentrations of students live in shelters that do not have a social worker to serve them. New York City schools have just 43 "Bridging the Gap" social workers, who are specially-trained to work with students who are homeless to address the underlying stress and trauma that can hold students back from thriving academically and socially. "Bridging the Gap" workers meet regularly with students to provide counseling, connect them to academic support and mental health services, and work to improve attendance.

The report makes clear that with just 43 total "Bridging the Gap" social workers citywide, thousands of students do not have adequate access to their important work. A copy of the full report is available [here](#).

- **More than 125 schools** have 50 or more students living in shelter and no Bridging the Gap social worker. Together, these schools serve more than **9,800 students** living in shelter.
- **More than 375 schools** have 25 or more students living in shelter and no Bridging the Gap social worker. Together, these schools serve more than **18,200 students** living in shelter.
- While it is important for schools with high concentrations of students living in shelters to have social workers dedicated to serving this population, **more than 95 schools** serve 25 or more students living in shelter and have no Department of Education (DOE) social worker at all (no Bridging the Gap social worker or other DOE social worker). Together, these schools serve more than **3,700 students** living in shelter.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio’s Executive Budget proposal calls for an additional 10 “Bridging the Gap” social workers to be added to city schools, but the small increase will not go far enough to help the thousands of students who confront homelessness each year.

Win recently called for increasing the number of social workers available to homeless students in their *The Forgotten Face of Homelessness: Children* report published in April of this year.

“Every day, hundreds of schools are responsible for educating thousands of students living in shelters without a dedicated social worker to help meet their needs,” said **Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York**. “While schools cannot end the homelessness crisis, they can help students living in shelter overcome obstacles and succeed in school, but only if they have sufficient support. The City should double the number of school social workers focused on serving students living in shelters.”

“We cannot honor our commitment to help every New York City child to succeed unless we step up to provide the resources that can make an impact for the thousands of children who leave shelter each day to attend school,” said **Christine C. Quinn, President and CEO of Win**. “Homeless children internalize a significant amount of trauma and toxic stress, and without the proper support, they are much more likely to fall behind their peers in the classroom, hurting their chances to complete high school, attend college, and find employment. Hiring school-based social workers to work directly with homeless students can make a significant difference in their lives and help families break the cycle of homelessness.”

“With nearly 1 in 10 public school children living in temporary housing, and 38,000 of them living in shelter over the course of the year, New York City must take additional steps to better support these children and their educational success,” said **Jennifer March, Executive Director of Citizens’ Committee for Children**. “While homelessness causes stress, anxiety and trauma for children, having social worker supports for these children in their schools has been beneficial for the students in the 43 schools that currently have a Bridging a Gap social worker. Expanding this successful model to 53 schools is not sufficient- we must expand Bridging the Gap to 100 schools in this budget.”

“If we want to ensure our children thrive, there’s no better strategy than to provide more social workers in our schools,” said **Council Member Stephen Levin, Chair of the General Welfare Committee**. “Schools are a common touchpoint for our City’s children. We must look at schools beyond simply being educational institutions – they are vital community resources, and our social workers are key to this mission. But we can’t get there without support from our Mayor. We know how important this is – it’s time for our budget to show how much we care.”

The City has taken a positive step by placing 43 “Bridging the Gap” social workers in schools with high populations of students living in shelters to focus on serving this population. These social workers have provided counseling to students, connected them to academic support and mental health services, and worked to improve attendance. Social workers are trained to address the underlying stress and trauma that hold back students from thriving academically and socially. “Bridging the Gap” social workers have a

specialized skillset to help families negotiate the overlapping systems that can pose barriers to regular school attendance.

Recently, over 30 councilmembers signed a letter to Mayor de Blasio asking for \$30.3 million in the FY 2019 budget to support students who are homeless.

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About Advocates for Children of New York (AFC):

Since 1971, Advocates for Children of New York has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds who are at greatest risk for failure or discrimination in school because of their poverty, disability, race, ethnicity, immigrant or English Language Learner status, sexual orientation, gender identity, homelessness, or involvement in the foster care or juvenile justice systems. AFC uses four integrated strategies: free advice and legal representation for families of students; free trainings and workshops for parents, communities, and educators and other professionals to equip them to advocate on behalf of students; policy advocacy to effect change in the education system and improve education outcomes; and impact litigation to protect the right to quality education and compel needed reform.

About Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC)

Citizens' Committee for Children of New York educates and mobilizes New Yorkers to make the city a better place for children. Since 1944, our advocacy has combined public policy research and data analysis with citizen action. We cast light on the issues, educate the public, engage allies, and identify and promote practical solutions to ensure that every New York City child is healthy, housed, educated and safe. For more information on CCC, visit our web site at www.cccnewyork.org. Stay up to date on the latest news and information regarding the well-being of New York City's children by following us on Facebook and Twitter.

About Win:

Since 1983, Win has been transforming the lives of New York City's homeless women and their children by providing a holistic solution of safe housing, critical services and programs they need to succeed on their own - so the women can regain their independence and their children can look forward to a brighter future. With more than 1,200 units of transitional housing providing shelter for more than 4,500 people every night, Win focuses on solutions for the many causes of homelessness by helping women improve their job skills, life skills, personal health and more. Win's children's services include childcare, after school programs, and Camp Win, a summer day camp program. Win also provides permanent supportive housing offering dedicated, long-term support to families with additional needs.