



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

## Testimony to be delivered to the Panel for Educational Policy

### Re: Accessibility Funding in the Proposed 2020-2024 Capital Plan

March 27, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Maggie Moroff and I am the Special Education Policy Coordinator at Advocates for Children of New York (AFC). I am also the Coordinator of the ARISE Coalition. For over 45 years, AFC 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. I'm here to speak tonight in support of the City's proposal to include \$750 million to improve school accessibility in the 2020-2024 Capital Plan.

Last fall, AFC released a data brief entitled, "Access Denied: School Accessibility in New York City." Using information obtained from the Department of Education (DOE), we found that:

- Less than one in five of the City's schools are fully accessible;
- In twenty-eight of the City's thirty-two school districts, less than one-third of schools are fully accessible;
- In seven districts, less than ten percent of the schools are fully accessible; and
- Just over a quarter of the buildings housing District 75 programs are fully accessible.

Given the dismal state of school accessibility in New York City, we are grateful that the City included \$750 million for improvements in their proposal for the 5-year-Capital Plan that you will be voting on this evening. That investment in accessibility, the City's largest to date, will literally open doors to include and integrate people, who are far too often excluded because of their accessibility needs. With that money, the DOE will be able to make capital improvements to render each community school district and District 75 considerably better prepared to offer fully accessible options to students, parents, school staff, and members of the community. For that, we thank the Mayor, the Chancellor, the Deputy Chancellor of School Planning and Development and her team, including Tom Taratko, the School Construction Authority, and the City Council.

We strongly urge you to approve a 5-year Capital Plan that includes at least \$750 million to improve school accessibility.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue.

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