



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn since 1971

## **Testimony to be Delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Immigration and Committee on Women and Gender Equity**

### **Re: Promise NYC and Access to Child Care for Immigrants**

**June 13, 2023**

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss early childhood education in New York City. My name is Betty Baez Melo, and I am an attorney and Director of the Early Childhood Education Project at Advocates for Children of New York (AFC). For more than 50 years, Advocates for Children 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. Every year, we help thousands of families navigate the education system, starting from the time children are born.

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We believe that every child should have access to high-quality early childhood care and education programs. As such, we were pleased when the City launched Promise NYC to increase access to early childhood programs to children who are undocumented. Unfortunately, the Mayor's Executive Budget does not include funding for this crucial initiative and hundreds of children risk being turned away from their program after June.

Many child care and preschool programs, including DOE extended day and year 3-K and Pre-K programs, require families to qualify for child care assistance in order to enroll. These programs have historically excluded children who are undocumented, citing state and federal restrictions on their eligibility for subsidized child care.

Since its launch in January, hundreds of families of children who are undocumented have been able to secure child care funding through Promise NYC to attend a variety of early childhood programs. Several hundred other families are on waitlists seeking care for their young children. Unfortunately, this funding is set to expire at the end of the month, meaning that children risk losing a seat in their program and new families will be unable to apply.

At a time when NYC has seen an increase in immigrant families, we ask for continued funding of this initiative so that children are not excluded from programs based on their immigration status. About 40% of the thousands of newly arrived



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immigrant children are ages zero to five; access to early care and education is critical to helping prepare them for success in elementary school and beyond, while also enabling their parents to work, connect with resources, find permanent housing, and settle in their new communities.

In Fiscal Year 2023, the City allocated \$10 million to serve approximately 600 children from January to June 2023. To maintain capacity for the full year, we are calling on the City to baseline \$20 million in the Fiscal Year 2024 Administration of Children Services (ACS) budget for Promise NYC.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.