



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Response to Release of City's FY 24 Preliminary Budget

January 12, 2023 (NEW YORK CITY) —Today, Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC), issued the following statement in response to the release of the City's Fiscal Year 2024 preliminary budget:

We are relieved that the City is not moving forward with certain planned cuts to school budgets next year at a time when students still need intensive academic and social-emotional support.

However, we are deeply concerned that the Mayor's Preliminary Budget does not extend funding for a number of initiatives that provide critical support to students and families. The Administration launched these initiatives with city funding that will expire in June, unless extended.

- **Mental Health Continuum (\$5M):** This innovative model, recently highlighted in the [NYC Speaks Action Plan](#), is the first-ever cross-agency partnership (DOE, H+H, DOHMH) to help students with significant mental health needs access expedited mental healthcare in person and via video. It supports students at 50 high-needs schools through school partnerships with H+H mental health clinics, adding dedicated staff to provide students with timely access to mental health services, NYC Well hotline to advise school staff with mental health inquiries, Children's Mobile Crisis Teams to respond to students in crisis, school-based mental health clinicians, Collaborative Problem Solving training to build school staff capacity to better manage student behavior, and culturally-responsive family engagement. *At a time when we have a youth mental health crisis, this model is urgently needed.*
- **Multi-Faceted Immigrant Family Communication and Outreach (\$4M):** This initiative helps the DOE to better communicate with immigrant families through approaches such as using local ethnic media to share updates from the DOE, sending paper notices to families' homes, reaching families over telephone and text message, and collaborating with immigrant-facing community-based organizations to create and launch information campaigns. *Given that more than 329,000 public school students do not have a parent who speaks English fluently and more than 61,000 children of Limited English Proficient parents live in households without broadband internet access, it is critical for this initiative to continue.*
- **Shelter-Based Community Coordinators (\$3.3M):** Twenty-five of the 100 shelter-based community coordinators the DOE committed to hiring are funded with city funding. With

more than 60% of students in shelter chronically absent, these coordinators, who are just beginning their work, can play an important role in helping students in shelter get to school every day and access needed educational support. *At a time when the number of students living in shelter has grown and low attendance is a top concern, it is important to ensure the continuity of this new program.*

- **Early Childhood Education and Care for Children who are Undocumented (\$10M):** No child should be turned away from an early childhood education program due to their immigration status. *The City should continue to be a leader in providing early learning opportunities to children, including those who are undocumented, by extending funding for Promise NYC.*

With the youth mental health crisis and the recent influx of newly arrived students living in shelter, this is not the time to jeopardize funding for coordinators to help students in shelter, mental health services for students, communication efforts to reach immigrant families, and early childhood education for undocumented children.

As the budget process moves forward, the City should avoid further cuts to education and invest in areas such as reading instruction and intervention and restorative justice practices. Particularly at a time when the City continues to have unspent federal COVID-19 relief funding, schools should receive additional resources to meet these needs and certainly should not lose funding.

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.