



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 General Welfare

Re: FY 24 Preliminary Budget - General Welfare

March 13, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the preliminary budget. 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).

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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 for children who are undocumented. Unfortunately, the FY 23 budget included only one-year funding, and the Mayor's FY 24 Preliminary Budget does not include any funding to continue this crucial initiative, leaving hundreds of children at risk of being turned away from their program after June.

Many child care and preschool programs, including DOE 3-K and Pre-K extended day and year programs, require families to qualify for child care assistance in order to enroll. These programs have historically excluded children who are undocumented as they are not eligible for this subsidy based on state and federal restrictions.

Since its launch in January, hundreds of families of children who are undocumented have applied for child care funding through Promise NYC. At a time when NYC has seen an increase in immigrant families, we should be increasing, and certainly not decreasing, funding for this initiative so that children are not excluded from programs based on their immigration status. About 40% of the thousands of newly arrived 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, with advocacy from Council Members and the Comptroller, the City allocated \$10 million to serve approximately 600 children from January to June 2023. Since \$10 million is being used over six months, it will be necessary to allocate



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\$20 million for the full year in FY 24 in order to maintain capacity. We are calling on the City to invest and baseline \$20 million in FY 24 for Administration of Children Services (ACS) funding for Promise NYC.

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