



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

## News Release

### For Immediate Release

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## AFC Response to the New York City FY 2025 Executive Budget

**April 24, 2024 (NEW YORK CITY)** — *Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC), issued the following statement in response to the release of the Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget:*

We are pleased that the Mayor's Executive Budget includes funding for critical education initiatives currently supported with expiring federal funds, including 3-K and preschool special education, 100 shelter-based community coordinators, more than 100 community schools, 500 school social workers and psychologists, Learning to Work programs, bilingual supports, translation and interpretation services, and dyslexia programming. These services and staff positions benefit hundreds of thousands of New York City students every year, and their loss would have been devastating for both individual young people and school communities. We thank Mayor Adams for making these vital investments in many key programs and are grateful to the City Council, particularly Speaker Adams and Council Member Joseph, for helping sound the alarm about the need to avert drastic cuts as temporary federal COVID-19 stimulus funds expire.

While we appreciate the investments made, there is more work to do. The investments in preschool special education are a positive step, but they do not represent a full restoration of current funding levels and fall short of what is needed to ensure the City can fulfill its legal obligations to preschoolers with disabilities. Currently, more than 600 children are waiting for a seat in a preschool special education class—in violation of both their legal rights and the Mayor's December 2022 promise to address the longstanding shortage of classes for preschoolers with autism, developmental delays, and other significant needs.

We urge the Mayor and the City Council to provide additional, needed funds for preschool special education as well as funding for several other important programs that are at risk of cuts due to the expiring federal funds (restorative justice and Student Success Centers), expiring one-year city funding (the Mental Health Continuum, Promise NYC, the immigrant family communication and outreach initiative, and community schools), and proposed cuts to city funding (3-K). The programs still on the chopping block due to expiring funding include:

- **Restorative justice practices** (\$12M in expiring federal COVID-19 relief), which help schools reduce the reliance on exclusionary discipline;
- **The Mental Health Continuum** (\$5M in expiring one-year city funding), which is providing students in 50 high-needs schools with access to expedited mental healthcare;
- **Promise NYC** (\$16M in expiring one-year city funding), which provides immigrant children with access to early learning programs from which they would otherwise be excluded due to their immigration status; and
- **The immigrant family communication and outreach initiative** (\$4M in expiring one-year city funding), which helps parents who speak languages other than English or have low digital literacy get school-related information.

These programs are already up and running—meaning students are receiving the direct mental health services they urgently need; hundreds of young children are enrolled in childcare programs; schools and educators have the tools and resources to better manage student behavior and keep young people in the classroom; and immigrant families are receiving information about their children’s public schools.

We are relieved that many of the education programs supported with federal stimulus funding are no longer in jeopardy, and we urge City leaders to go further to prevent the loss of other critical supports that students and families need.

#### **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.*