



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

## Testimony to be Delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth and Committee on Finance

### Re: Executive Budget Hearing – Children and Youth Promise NYC and Access to Child Care for Immigrant Children

May 10, 2024

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Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the need for continued funding for Promise NYC. My name is Diana Imbert, and I am a staff attorney for the Early Childhood Education Project at Advocates for Children of New York. For more than 50 years, Advocates for Children has worked to protect and ensure a high-quality education for New York students facing 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.

We were pleased when the City launched Promise NYC in January of 2023 to increase access to early childhood programs for children who are undocumented. Unfortunately, the Mayor's Executive Budget does not include funding to continue this vital initiative, and hundreds of children risk being turned away from their programs this summer if the funding does not continue.

Many early childhood programs, including New York City Public Schools' Infant & Toddler programs, as well as 3-K and Pre-K programs that offer extended hours, require families to qualify for subsidized childcare assistance 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 the launch of Promise NYC, hundreds of families of children who are undocumented have been able to access a variety of early childhood programs. From its inception, demand has exceeded capacity, and we know that several hundred other families have contacted agencies seeking care for their young children through Promise NYC but have been turned away due to lack of



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funding. Unfortunately, all funding for Promise NYC is set to expire in June, which would result in children losing seats in their programs and new families being unable to apply.

At a time when New York City has seen a substantial increase in immigrant families, the City should be increasing – and certainly not eliminating - funding for this initiative so that children are not excluded from programs based on their immigration status. Promise NYC is critical for helping to prepare newly arrived children for success in elementary school and beyond, and it can also be transformative for parents by enabling them to work or study, connect with resources, and settle in their new communities.

We join in the recommendation made by the City Council in its response to the preliminary budget in calling on the City to allocate and baseline \$25 million in the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) budget for Promise NYC.

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