



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

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## News Release

**For immediate release**

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## Response to the Release of the New York City Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget

**February 17, 2026 (NEW YORK CITY)** — *In response to the release of Mayor Mamdani's Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2027, Maria Odom, Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC), issued the following statement:*

We are pleased that the budget released today baselines last year's increased investment of \$70M for preschool special education. The FY 2026 budget included this long-overdue investment to help address the City's systemic failure to provide all preschoolers with disabilities with the evaluations and services they have the right to receive, yet despite the ongoing need, the funding was inexplicably for one year only. Providing mandated services to students with disabilities is not optional, and we are grateful that the Mayor's preliminary budget extends and baselines resources needed to help address service backlogs and meet the City's legal obligations to preschoolers with disabilities—a job that is not yet done. As the City moves forward with its plans for universal child care, it must ensure that young children with disabilities are not left waiting for the support they need and have a right to receive. We are also pleased to see increased funding for contracted related services for students with disabilities and District 75 classes.

As the budget process moves forward, Mayor Mamdani and the City Council must ensure that students do not lose access to other programs and services that are already up and running. Several impactful education programs—including restorative justice, the Mental Health Continuum, immigrant family communications, and Learning to Work—are funded, in whole or in part, with city dollars that will run out in June unless funding is extended in the FY 2027 budget. The Mayor should baseline funding for these initiatives as well to help ensure their long-term stability.

In addition to sustaining existing programs, City leaders should go further and make additional investments to address the pressing unmet needs we see in our work with students and families. We urge the City to take steps in this year's budget to:

- Address the shortage of service providers and fulfill the City's legal obligation to students with disabilities across grade levels;
- Expand access to one-on-one or small group reading intervention for middle and high school students who need more help learning to read;

- Hire at least one behavioral specialist per district who can help schools respond effectively to challenging behaviors, provide students with the individualized behavior supports they need, and prevent crises before they occur;
- Establish the position of English Language Learner (ELL) instructional specialist to ensure students learning English as a new language receive appropriate instruction and support;
- Expand travel training to help students with disabilities learn how to use public transportation independently;
- Provide interim transportation to ensure students in the foster system can get to school every day while waiting for bus service to be arranged; and
- Make more schools accessible to students, educators, and family members with physical disabilities.

AFC's full Fiscal Year 2027 City budget agenda is available at <https://advocatesforchildren.org/policy-resource/budget-priorities-2027/>.

#### **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.*