



**Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Re: FY 2027 Executive Budget**

June 10, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Jindu Obiofuma. I am the Special Education Policy Manager at Advocates for Children of New York, and I am speaking today on behalf of the ARISE Coalition, which I coordinate. ARISE comprises parents, teachers, academics, advocates and allies who have worked since 2008 to advocate for systemic solutions to the challenges faced by New York City public school students with disabilities and their families.

At a time when thousands of students with disabilities are going without their legally mandated services and as the City is grappling with rising due process special education costs stemming from the gaps in public school special education, the City must make robust investments to better support students with disabilities in our public schools. We urge you to address the various challenges faced by NYC students with disabilities by making the investments needed to provide every student with the special education evaluations, services, and programs they have a legal right to receive.

While we are pleased with the recent increased investments in preschool special education, District 75 classes, and contracted related services, those investments represent only a portion of what is needed to ensure NYCPS can adequately support the special education needs of all students with disabilities. Significant, ongoing investments are still needed to hire additional evaluators to provide timely assessments for referred students, to hire additional providers to reliably meet the needs of students with IEP-mandated services and to raise the reimbursement rates for Related Services Authorizations, so that students whose schools are unable to provide IEP-mandated services can access independent providers.

Furthermore, we need to invest in more of what works. This means expanding access to literacy interventions and travel training while restoring and baselining funding for critical programming at risk of cuts next month like Sensory Exploration, Education & Discovery (SEED), Restorative Justice, and the Mental Health Continuum.

Finally, we urge you to commit at least an additional \$450 million dollars in the 2025-2029 Capital Plan to make more schools accessible for students, staff, educators and community members with physical disabilities; currently, only one-third of our school buildings are fully accessible.

We hope that you will rise to the challenge and invest in a future where all NYC students with disabilities get the education and support to which they are legally entitled and which they have long deserved. Thank you.