



**Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council
Committee on Education**

Re: FY 2027 Preliminary Budget – Education

March 23, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. 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 been working since 2008 to advocate for systemic solutions to the challenges faced by New York City public school students with disabilities and their families.

There are many challenges faced by students with disabilities, and the City must make the investments needed to provide every student with the special education evaluations, services, and programs they have a legal right to receive, but I want to use this time to discuss the particular challenges posed by the lack of school buildings that are accessible to students, families, educators, and community members with physical disabilities.

Today, more than 35 years since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, only about a third of New York City public schools are fully accessible. When schools are inaccessible, students often have to travel long distances to receive their education and miss out on opportunities to build formative relationships with students in their own communities. Inaccessible schools also raise employment challenges for educators and staff with physical disabilities while limiting opportunities for relatives and community members with physical disabilities to attend important gatherings like PTA meetings or school plays.

Five years ago, the situation was much worse, with fewer than one in five schools fully accessible, so we are encouraged by the City's progress with the funding allocated to school accessibility. However, the \$800 million in the 2025-2029 Capital Plan is insufficient, given that NYC Public Schools itself estimated that, at this pace, it would take *ten* five-year capital plans to reach full accessibility. Conversely, \$1.5 billion in sustained funding for school accessibility would enable us to achieve full accessibility in half that time.

We are asking for the City to allocate at least **an additional \$450 million in the 2025-2029 Capital Plan for school accessibility projects, bringing the total investment in the current Capital Plan to \$1.25 billion.** With that money, the City could make an estimated 45 percent of NYC public schools fully accessible by the end of the current plan and come closer to realizing the unmet promise of the ADA.

Thank you.