



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Testimony submitted to the New York City Council Committee on Education

Re: Reporting on payments to early childhood care and education providers (Intro. 203). January 30, 2026

Board of Directors

Kimberley D. Harris, *President*
Jessica A. Davis, *Treasurer*
Eric F. Grossman, *President Emeritus*
Carmita Alonso
Matt Berke
Whitney Chatterjee
Matt Darnall
Brian Friedman
Jamie A. Levitt, *past president*
Maura K. Monaghan
Jon H. Oram
Jonathan D. Polkes
Victoria Reese
Ashish Shah
Misti Ushio
Veronica M. Wissel

Executive Director

Maria M. Odom

Chief Operating Officer

Melkis Alvarez-Baez

Deputy Director

Matthew Lenaghan

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the proposed bill to amend the administrative code to require reporting on payments to early childhood care and education providers (Intro. 203). My name is Betty Baez Melo, and I am an attorney and Director of the Early Childhood Education Project at Advocates for Children of New York (AFC). For more than 50 years, Advocates for Children 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. Every year, we help thousands of families navigate the education system, starting from the time children are born.

Every child should have access to a high-quality early childhood care and education program. While we advocate primarily on behalf of children and families, we support efforts to better resource programs and the early childhood workforce, including by increasing oversight in provider payments. We recognize that delayed payments jeopardize the ability of early childhood programs to stay afloat and cause administrative burdens for programs that divert attention and resources from the children in their care.

In addition to the early childhood care and education programs that contract with the New York City Department of Education to provide Infant & Toddler, 3-K, and Pre-K programs, the DOE also contracts with community-based preschool special education programs to provide classrooms for young children with disabilities who need very intensive supports. These programs also face challenges and delays in securing timely payment from the DOE.

The DOE relies on preschool special education programs to support preschoolers with the most intensive disabilities. The programs offer small special education classrooms with specialized staff for students with disabilities who cannot attend general



education 3-K and Pre-K programs. They are vital in ensuring that the City meets its legal obligation to provide a preschool special class seat for every child who needs one.

Too often, in conversations about early childhood education providers, preschool special education providers are left out. To ensure community-based organizations that contract with the DOE to provide preschool special education classes are included in the data reported, we recommend explicitly naming these programs in the reporting bill (Intro. 203), such as by adding the following underlined language:

b. The department shall submit to the mayor and the speaker of the council, and post on the department's website, on a monthly basis a report regarding reimbursements to early childhood care and education providers, including preschool special education providers, which the department has contracted with to provide these services

Earlier this month, the DOE posted information online projecting a shortage of preschool special education classrooms this spring¹ that could leave hundreds of young children with disabilities who have a legal right to attend a special education classroom sitting at home while their peers benefit from preschool programs. Therefore, the City and the DOE must make every effort to ensure they are supporting and timely compensating preschool special education programs and that they are meeting their full legal obligations to preschoolers with disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

¹ See Regional Need for Preschool Special Education, available at <https://infohub.nyced.org/in-our-schools/working-with-nycps/early-childhood/regional-need-for-preschool-special-education>.