



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

Re: FY27 Preliminary Budget – Children and Youth

March 16, 2026

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is May DePierro, and I am Policy Associate 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, and for over 20 years, AFC's Project Achieve has advocated for greater educational opportunities for students in NYC's foster care system.

Interim Transportation for Students in Foster Care Awaiting School Bus Service

We are asking the City to invest **\$3 million to provide interim transportation for students in foster care waiting for bus service to begin.**

When a student is placed in foster care, they are already facing countless disruptions, uncertainty, and trauma. They should not also have to worry about whether they can stay in the school where their teachers and classmates know their name – or how they will get there.

The City has a legal obligation to provide transportation to students in foster care so they can stay at their original school. However, it can take weeks or even months for New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) to arrange bus service.

The City does offer prepaid rideshare when there is no bus available, but only after students have already waited at least *ten school days*. Even once it's offered, rideshare is not always feasible, as an adult must accompany the student – a task that is often impossible for foster parents with jobs or other children in the home who attend schools in totally different communities. While the City also offers transportation reimbursement, it will not reimburse for the cost of a chaperone, and the daily



reimbursement cap is often insufficient to cover rideshare services that include a vetted chaperone or longer cross-borough trips.

Consequently, many students in foster care miss school or are forced to transfer schools even though it is not in their best interest to do so. Last school year, 55% of students in foster care were chronically absent—missing at least one out of every ten school days—and one in five transferred schools at least once during the school year.

There are feasible solutions. For example, the City could contract with transportation providers that use vetted drivers and do not require additional chaperones (such as Kid Car, which operates in NYC, or HopSkipDrive, used by districts including Los Angeles); use ACS or other city-owned vehicles that include escorts, as is done for students placed at the Children's Center; launch a dedicated interim transportation service for students awaiting bus routes; hire aides to accompany students using rideshare services; or, at a minimum, reimburse chaperone costs and increase the daily reimbursement cap to cover longer trips and services such as Kid Car.

The City must do more to ensure that students in foster care have uninterrupted access to school at a critical moment in their lives and invest **\$3 million to provide interim transportation for students in foster care awaiting bus service.**

Promise NYC

In January 2023, the City launched Promise NYC to increase access to subsidized child care for children who would otherwise be ineligible for existing programs due to federal eligibility requirements. The program allows around 1,000 children to enroll in early care and education programs—helping prepare them for success in elementary school and beyond, while also enabling their parents to work and connect with resources. However, the full \$25M in Administration for Children's Services (ACS) funding for Promise NYC will run out at the end of June if not extended in the FY 2027 budget. This funding should be extended and baselined. We also support calls to increase funding for this program to help meet the demand.

Advocates for Children of New York's full city budget priorities are online at <https://advocatesforchildren.org/policy-resource/budget-priorities-2027>.

We look forward to working with you as the budget process moves forward. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.