



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

Re: Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget—Education

March 23, 2026

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you about the Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Education Budget.

My name is Madison Pinckney. I am an attorney on the Postsecondary Readiness Project at Advocates for Children of New York, and I am testifying today on behalf of the Transition Alliance, a coalition of more than 20 organizations dedicated to improving transition planning for students with disabilities in New York City. Together, we represent students, parents, advocates, and professionals working to ensure that students with disabilities are not left behind as they prepare for life after high school.

I am here to discuss the need to **increase funding for travel training**, which helps students with disabilities learn the skills needed to navigate public transit and travel independently, exponentially expanding their post-secondary opportunities while reducing reliance on yellow school bus service.

Travel training is currently offered to students primarily through New York City Public Schools' District 75 Travel Training Program. It uses one-on-one instruction to teach students with disabilities how to navigate public transit between their homes and schools while building their sense of confidence and agency. However, the current program is small, serving only a fraction of the students who need it. Families have expressed how valuable travel training would be for their children—not just for long-term independence, but for immediate needs like getting to internships, classes, or jobs.

Through our work, the Transition Alliance has seen first-hand how travel training can change the trajectory of a student's life.

I worked with a high school junior who dreamed of becoming a chef. She was accepted into an after-school vocational program that would give her hands-on kitchen experience and put her on a path toward that goal. But there was one major barrier: the program did not provide transportation, and she had never been taught how to navigate public transit safely on her own.

Without a way to get there, she was on the verge of losing that opportunity entirely. Her family tried to piece together solutions by adjusting work schedules to accompany her and exploring costly travel alternatives, but none were sustainable. What should have been an exciting step toward her future instead became a source of stress and uncertainty.

The student's parents tried to get her travel training but were unable to access it. With no other option, the parents worked tirelessly to travel train the student themselves. The student learned how to map her route, navigate buses and subways, and problem-solve along the way. Within weeks, she was traveling independently—not just to her vocational program, but throughout the city.

This was not just about transportation. It was about access, confidence, and independence. Because she could get there, she could participate. Because she could participate, she could build skills, connections, and a future aligned with her goals. Without travel training, this student would have stayed home. With it, she moved closer to her career. While this student's parents had the ability to travel train their child, many parents do not feel equipped to do so. For most students, this story would have ended differently.

While NYCPS offers a range of programs to support students' postsecondary goals, many do not provide transportation. Without the ability to travel independently, many students with disabilities are effectively shut out of these opportunities.

At the same time, limited NYCPS travel training program capacity and long waitlists prevent many students from accessing the travel training they need.

Therefore, we are calling on the City to **invest \$2M to expand access to travel training**, so it can serve more students with disabilities. This funding would expand access to travel training for students with disabilities in District 1-32 schools, while also increasing capacity within District 75 schools. Funding would also support contracts with experienced community-based organizations that already provide high-quality travel training. These partners could train students directly while also building the capacity of school staff to scale the program. This expansion would help students develop the comprehensive travel skills needed for full participation in their communities, including access to internships, work-based learning, post-secondary opportunities, and employment.

Investing in travel training is a major way to support the independence and agency of students with disabilities by promoting their ability to travel between home and school, internships and ultimately post-secondary education or employment.

Travel training can be the difference between a student graduating with the skills they need to be independent in adulthood and one who is left behind.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.