



# Advocates for Children of New York

## Protecting every child's right to learn

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Public Comment submitted to the Panel for Educational Policy  
Re: 2025-2029 Five-Year Capital Plan Proposed Amendments – Need for Additional  
Funding for School Accessibility  
March 26, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. My name is Maggie Moroff, and I work as the Senior Special Education Policy Coordinator at Advocates for Children of New York (AFC). Through that work, I coordinate the ARISE Coalition, a coalition focused on improving education for students with disabilities in New York City. Together, AFC and ARISE have been advocating for increased funding to make schools fully accessible to parents, students, educators, and community members with physical disabilities. For the 2025-2029 Capital Plan, we are urging the City to allocate at least an additional \$450 million (for a total of \$1.25 billion) for school accessibility. Such funding would bring 45% of New York City's school buildings to full accessibility by the end of this decade.

One of the biggest obstacles parents and advocates experience to real, meaningful inclusion of students with a variety of needs is the lack of physical accessibility of school buildings. Without fully accessible buildings, the school near where a student lives is often not an option for students with physical disabilities. Students who need accessible locations end up being bused far from home, spending hours a day going back-and-forth, separated from their siblings, neighbors and local friends. For those of us who grew up attending our local schools, we know how important attending a nearby school can be – not just during the school day, but afterschool for clubs and playdates and all the other things that young people do in their non-school hours as they develop non-academic, artistic, community-based, and social skills. Furthermore, during the school day, consider the students in schools that are only *partially* accessible – and there are many of them – who can get to their classrooms, but not to the music or art rooms, or the libraries and other common spaces. Those students' experiences in those locations are also compromised. Not until our schools are fully accessible will youth with accessibility needs be able to join their friends for close-to-home after-school activities and participate in all that goes on during the school day. Consider also family members with accessibility

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needs who may not be able to get to their students' classrooms or other key locations for conferences or parent-teacher activities. Accessibility benefits *everyone*: the grandparent who uses a walker, the teacher recovering from knee surgery, the parent whose baby is in a stroller, the students who would otherwise miss out on becoming friends with a student who happens to use a wheelchair.

Six years ago, AFC and ARISE worked closely with the City to secure funding to make more schools accessible. We were pleased, at the time, that the City invested \$750 million in the 2020-2024 five-year capital plan for school accessibility and that the Panel for Education Policy joined in that work and approved the plan. Last year, the City allocated \$800 million in the 2025-2029 Capital Plan for further work on school accessibility. With that funding, the City is working on some critical renovations to improve accessibility in NYC schools. But there's still so much more to be done.

It's been more than 30 years since the Americans with Disabilities Act was enacted, and our schools remain more inaccessible than accessible – with only around 1/3 of all NYC schools fully accessible. That has to change. We're continuing to call on the City to invest an additional \$450 million (above the current \$800 million now allotted) to the 2025-29 Capital Plan. As New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) has previously testified before the City Council, those funds would enable the City to make 45% of schools fully accessible by the end of this decade.

We strongly urge the members of the Panel for Education Policy to ensure an additional \$450 million is added to this current Capital Plan to improve school accessibility.  
Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue.