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United Neighborhood Houses Statement on New York City's FY24 Budget

New York – June 29, 2023 – In response to Mayor Adams' Fiscal Year 2024 Budget for New York City, [United Neighborhood Houses](https://www.unhny.org/) Executive Director Susan Stamler commented:

Human services cannot happen without the humans who make them run. Despite countless phone calls, rallies, and 6,000 workers pausing services to make their struggles known at City Hall, our City's leaders decided that their work is not worthy of significant investment or support.

Mayor Adams settled contracts with most of the municipal workforce and held up the 16% raises that set the standard for bargaining. He gave these workers multi-year, cost of living adjustments (COLA). Instead of doing so for the human services sector, 125,000 human services workers will divide up a \$40 million "workforce enhancement" fund. This falls far short of the \$200 million needed for the 6.5% COLA that workers demanded.

We'll continue to see staff leave for other jobs- particularly ones with the City paying higher salaries. It's not right for the City to intentionally depress wages in the human services sector and then use that sector as a recruiting ground to fill municipal positions.

Settlement houses have shared their struggles- turnover rates are high, and many positions have remained vacant for over a year. Despite their best efforts, they cannot retain staff. This is a crisis that will only get worse as the cost of living continues to rise in New York City, and will condemn the people who do remain in the sector to poverty level wages.

Meanwhile, this will all translate into less support for New Yorkers—including fewer classrooms for early childhood education and afterschool and less activities at senior centers because of staff shortages. The inability to hire positions like case workers, social workers, youth activity specialists, and more threatens the delivery of essential services throughout communities.

Though there are investments in new services and programming, these gains feel hollow when we're asking the human services sector to do more but not solving the underlying problem of low wages.

We urge the City's leaders to do the right thing and compensate the human services workforce with just pay.

United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is a policy and social change organization representing 46 neighborhood settlement houses that reach 765,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life. A progressive leader for more than 100 years, UNH is stewarding a new era for New York's settlement house movement. We mobilize our members and their communities to advocate for good public policies and promote strong organizations and practices that keep neighborhoods resilient and thriving for all New Yorkers. UNH leads advocacy and partners with our members on a broad range of issues including civic and community engagement, neighborhood affordability, healthy aging, early childhood education, adult literacy, and youth development. We also provide customized professional development and peer learning to build the skills and leadership capabilities of settlement house staff at all levels. For more information, visit <http://www.unhny.org/>.