



**UNITED
NEIGHBORHOOD
HOUSES**

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**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses
Before the New York City Council Committees on Youth Services
Council Member Althea Stevens, Chair**

**Panel for the Committee of Youth Services
Submitted by Dante Bravo, Youth Policy Analyst
March 4th, 2022**

Thank you, Chair Stevens and members of the New York City Council, for the opportunity to testify. My name is Dante Bravo, and I am the Youth Policy Analyst at United Neighborhood Houses (UNH). UNH is a policy and social change organization representing 45 neighborhood settlement houses, 40 in New York City, 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.

The COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged New York City's economy and safety net and has underscored the significant racial and economic disparities that have impacted New York City's neighborhoods for decades. Just as they did through other crises our City has faced, settlement houses have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 emergency response by continuing to deliver essential services to New Yorkers, providing emergency food, counseling, shelter, youth and family supports, and more.

Youth programming has played a significant role throughout the COVID-19 pandemic by maintaining connections to youth and their families when schools closed, connecting families to other essential supports beyond after school, and helping youth navigate a challenging time. Summer programming, including summer camps and the Summer Youth Employment Program, has long been the cornerstone of the positive youth development movement, offering exciting and supportive programs outside of the September-June school structure. It is crucial that New York City maintain and invest in its summer programs not only to offer youth and their caregivers safe spaces to be in the summer, but also to maintain the positive development, enrichment, and most importantly fun that comes with summer programs.

Last summer, because of concerns around learning loss due to COVID-19 disruptions in the academic year, the City launched a new model called Summer Rising - a partnership between the

Department of Education (DOE) and Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) contracted community-based organizations (CBOs). From the CBO provider perspective, the model might have yielded positive results for youth but was incredibly challenging to implement. Much of this testimony draws on lessons learned from last summer, and feedback from our settlement house members on how to improve that process this year.

Despite the need for summer programming for Summer 2022, we are concerned that the City is committing the same mistakes that made last summer so challenging for providers. There was no funding for middle school SONYC programs in the FY23 Preliminary Budget, nor was there any funding for rates to reflect current operating costs. DYCD has already asked providers to submit COMPASS work scopes for the summer by February 17th without any guidance on this summer's program model, and without a clear commitment around the level of funding. One bright spot in Summer 2022 preparations is the Summer Youth Employment Program, which saw baselined funds in the FY23 Preliminary Budget, and has seen DYCD working collaboratively with providers to address their needs so that the system can accommodate a record 100,000 youth this summer. We applaud DYCD for taking these steps, and urge the City to turn its attention to K-8 programming.

This testimony focuses on recommendations for strengthened support and partnership with the CBO sector — crucial to ensure the success of city-wide summer 2022 programming - based on the significant challenges that CBOs faced while facilitating the 2021 Summer Rising program.¹

Overall Summer 2022 Recommendations

In order to provide young people with high quality services and to ensure the stability of the youth services field in Summer 2022, UNH recommends that the City do the following:

1. **Fund programs early and adequately** - Funding for summer programming must be baselined immediately, and the City must give a sense of how many youth they plan to serve this summer. The Adams Administration missed a major chance to set CBOs on a positive path this summer when they did not allocate any new funding for COMPASS, SONYC, or Beacon programs in the FY23 Preliminary Budget. Right now, the City has only allocated the baselined COMPASS elementary summer programming, which serves approximately 45,000 students with outdated, inadequate rates. There are no funds allocated for SONYC middle school programs, nor for enhanced rates that providers desperately need. Furthermore, the model budget process carried out by UNH and CBOs underscores that summer programs are underfunded, and need more resources to do well, especially more funding to pay better wages to staff. We urge the City to fund providers at a rate of \$1848 per elementary school student and \$959 per middle school student. These rates are discussed later in this testimony.
2. **Ensure that Positive Youth Development is the primary focus of summer programming.** - DYCD's summer camp programming is typically centered on fun, youth development, arts, recreation and embedded learning. Last summer saw new involvement from DOE

¹ A note: this document does not analyze youth outcomes or family satisfaction when it comes to Summer Rising, nor does it extensively comment on DOE operations regarding Summer Rising. Based on feedback from CBO providers, families seemed generally satisfied with the program and relieved that it existed and offered youth enrichment opportunities in the summer. However, there are still ways to improve the partnership with CBOs in summer programming.

teachers and principals in summer programming, and early communications from DYCD indicate that there will be a similar approach this summer. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, it is crucial that the main focus of summer programming center activities on Positive Youth Development instead of academic remediation. CBOs should be empowered to lead planning and ensure that a summer program includes enrichment activities outside of academics, and include time for play.

3. **Strengthen operational issues**, especially in the case of a formalized partnership between city agencies - which includes the following:
 - **Have a coordinated office to manage regulatory issues** - DYCD funds and supports CBOs to carry out high quality programming; DOE cites those programs and, in last year's summer programming, offered academic enrichment; DOHMH provides licenses and helps to clear staff via background checks. It is crucial that these three agencies coordinate as soon as possible so that the contracting, citing, licensing, staffing, and background check process is as smooth as possible.
 - **Pair schools and CBOs in a thoughtful and intentional way** - School matches with CBOs must happen as early as possible and with coordinated communication between both DYCD and DOE. Before citing summer programs, the City should analyze neighborhoods to understand local demand and expand CBO capacity accordingly. Finally, the City should strive to match school and CBO partners that already have an existing relationship. If it is a new partnership, that pairing should be made as soon as possible to give both parties time to plan and prepare for this summer.
4. **Set realistic enrollment targets and improve the enrollment process** - Last year when the City encouraged parents to sign up for Summer Rising in early July, program infrastructure was already maxed out well before the enrollment cut-off date. Going forward the City needs to design a better infrastructure to meet demand and direct families towards sites that can give them service. This includes the following:
 - The enrollment process must be clear and simple for families and managed by the CBO. There also must be paper application forms for those who need it, and all materials should be translated into multiple languages. In the case of a potential DOE/DYCD partnership, both school and CBO partners should be working off of one coordinated enrollment list.
 - There should be a registration deadline for families before the program starts, so that CBOs can prepare for the number of youth they are serving. Additionally, if a site is at capacity prior to program start, there should be processes in place for CBOs to refer families to other local programs that still have seats available.
 - CBO staff must be compensated for time spent enrolling families in summer programs.
5. **Ensure safe staffing** - The staff recruitment and onboarding process is time consuming for CBOs. If summer program planning begins as early as possible, programs can take the time to staff their programs well and train staff to deliver high quality services, ensuring that safety and quality measures are central pieces of a summer program's foundation.
6. **Improve the fingerprinting and staff clearances process** - Since the implementation of the Comprehensive Background Check process in 2019, background check turnaround times for CBO staff working in youth-serving programs has lagged, leading to staffing challenges in programs. Though Summer Rising solely utilized the PETS system, this also experienced delays and glitches for CBO staff. Early planning for programs, combined

with increased capacity within City agencies to process clearances, can alleviate this issue for Summer 2022.

7. **Support children with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)** - One-on-one paraprofessionals must be made available to any child with an IEP. CBOs also should be notified when a child in their program has an IEP, rather than putting the burden on the family to share that information with the CBO. In addition, one-on-one paraprofessional staff must be treated as paraprofessionals, not group leaders/adults that count towards staffing ratios.

The Staffing Crisis in the Youth Development Field

Settlement house staff have consistently identified staffing challenges as a key issue facing their organization. In late 2021, UNH asked our membership how difficult it is to staff programs on a scale of 1 (least difficult) to 5 (extremely difficult). They answered at a 3.8, and cited youth programs as one of the most challenging positions to fill. We fear that this staffing challenge will continue this summer without significant intervention from the City to address staff shortages. Staff to student ratios are currently 10:1 for elementary students and 15:1 for middle school students, though providers have cited that a 15:2 and 10:2 ratio are ideal for program quality and participant safety.

Last summer, staffing proved especially difficult given the high number of program participants (estimated at 200,000 participants when compared to previous years serving 90,000 young people). Despite this, providers made the impossible happen; they served more youth when many of their sites were at capacity or struggled with staffing. However, providers are concerned that Summer Rising might create a precedent where a rush to serve as many students as possible ignores the reality of the stark staffing crisis in the field.

To address staffing challenges last year, the DOE made a pool of paraprofessional substitute teachers available as more and more young people enrolled in Summer Rising. However, this was only a stopgap solution as these paraprofessional substitute teachers were technically DOE employees and were often only present for the morning section of programming; this pool of talent were also not always accountable to the on-site CBO, making it difficult for CBOs to manage staff effectively. Summer programs also leaned on SYEP participants and partnerships with local universities to help fill the staffing gap.

Some CBOs also witnessed slow paraprofessional support for children with Individualized Educational Plans (IEP), which put an even greater onus on CBO group leaders to support these young people without the required resources, tools, or even background knowledge of what support their participants needed. For example, one staff member spoke of a group leader who asked their supervisor for support in engaging a non-verbal student because that student had no other support aside from the understaffed CBO workers.

These challenges have continued to plague after-school programs across the city well into the 2021-2022 school year. Without any additional financial support from the City to pay competitive wages, staffing issues threaten to undermine providers' ability to even run basic summer programming, let alone quality programming. While UNH and the larger provider community will always support partnerships with local universities and SYEP participants to develop a pipeline for future full-time youth development professionals, this is at best a stop-gap strategy to the impressive talent needs of the field. At worst, this strategy actively contributes to the notion that jobs in youth work are temporary and therefore should be compensated at extremely low rates,

despite the level of expertise our youth development staff have cultivated over decades in the field.

The only way to fix this staffing shortage is to take similarly unprecedented measures to raise wages so that CBOs can offer new and existing staff competitive wages. The next section of this testimony will focus on what exactly one of those measures could look like: a higher cost-per-participant rate.

Funding and Cost-per-participant Rate

Traditionally, rates for summer programming contracts averaged at around \$1088 per COMPASS elementary school slot and \$600 per SONYC middle school slot; these rates were put in place in 2014 under the last COMPASS/SONYC RFP. However, last year, the FY22 Adopted Budget included an additional \$24 million for summer programming, with every DYCD contract receiving a 30% increase in their budgets. This increase in funding resulted in a cost-per-participant rate of \$1414 for elementary school students and \$660 for middle school students.

UNH applauded the higher rates and were grateful to the City for recognizing the increased costs last summer, but many providers shared that these rates were insufficient to cover the larger challenges with running programming. Some providers were able to make these budgets work for their programs because of the amount of staff vacancies their programs experienced - which is far from ideal for any quality summer program. Middle school programming in particular was difficult to staff, given that these rates were lower and staff members were told to expect to work a shorter number of hours than their elementary counterparts but, due to DOE staffing shortages, in reality worked 10+ hours a day to cover the morning portion of the program. Additionally, these rates were less challenging for some larger providers because of the scale of their programs; for smaller providers with only a handful of sites, these rates proved challenging.

For Summer 2022, CBOs will have to provide programming after inflation has increased 7.5% and in a more competitive labor market than last summer. UNH urges the City to increase the cost-per-participant rates to \$1848 for elementary school programming and \$959 for middle school programming. These higher rates would set a wage floor for summer counselors at \$21 an hour, allowing providers to offer competitive salaries in the midst of a staffing crisis within the field. This is also in line with the #JustPay campaign for human service workers. Furthermore, last summer, DOE paraprofessional substitutes made a base rate of \$25 per hour, and DYCD has messaged that this pool of talent will no longer be available for providers to lean on for Summer 2022.

While we understand that these rates are higher, this increase is to help with the incredible staffing shortage and to stabilize the youth development workforce as the sector loses many of these talented individuals to other employers. These rates were also determined under the assumption that Summer 2022 will share a similar program model to Summer Rising back in 2021; a sample budget detailing the rates is included with this testimony.

Mental Health Support and the need for Funded Mandates

During the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic, 1 in 600 Black children and 1 in 700 Latinx children lost their parent or caregiver to the pandemic in New York State, more than

double the rate of white children. More than half of those parent deaths were in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens. Losing a caregiver is associated with a range of negative health effects, including lower self-esteem, a higher risk of suicide, and symptoms of mental illness. According to pediatricians, addressing the impact of family death on young people will “require intentional investment to address individual, community, and structural inequalities.”

Despite having returned to in-person instruction for the 2021-2022 school year, young people across New York City are still reeling from the mental health impact of the social isolation and grief from the COVID19 pandemic. Settlement houses have reported high levels of depression among middle school students and need resources to meet their needs—this means the budget to hire social workers to do crisis work, family outreach work, one on one counseling, and more.

Regardless of whatever program model the city chooses to implement for Summer 2022, that program model must include funding, staffing, and other resources so CBOs can focus on the well-being of their participants, curriculum and other markers of program quality instead of basic elements of programming - in addition to the higher cost-per-participant rates and other investments into summer 2022.

COVID-19 Safety and Precautions

In order to run quality, effective, and safe programming that families can feel secure in sending their young people to, the City must issue clear guidance to providers on what to do in the case of a positive COVID-19 case as well as precautions to take to minimize risk.

Any future guidance from DYCD should clarify the role of providers in serving young people who have not received the COVID-19 vaccine, especially if their families have chosen to not vaccinate them, especially if a child needs to be vaccinated to enter a venue for a trip or other activity. This is especially salient as most families have already returned to work, or will by this summer, and therefore need viable options for childcare over the summer.

Providers have already stretched their capacity and received little support in terms of tracking the vaccination status of their program participants in afterschool, which makes operating summer programming without clear guidance from city agencies especially difficult. Despite City and State government beginning the steps to drop mask mandates, the fact is that not every classroom has proper ventilation nor air purifiers, which makes staff uneasy and recruitment that much more difficult.

COVID-19 safety precautions also impact the staffing ratios for summer programming. Traditionally, the School-Age Child Care licensing requires a staffing ratio of 1 background cleared adult to 10 children, but because of different licensing requirements and issues with staffing, providers had to use a 1 to 15 ratio to still be able to observe social distancing procedures.

Summer Youth Employment Program

On February 15th, Mayor Adams announced a major expansion of summer youth workforce programming, including plans to increase the number of baselined Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) slots from 70,000 to 90,000. The FY23 Preliminary Budget includes an additional \$57 million in baselined funding to cover this SYEP slot increase, bringing anticipated baselined funding for the program up to \$236 million annually.

UNH celebrates this important milestone. For the last two decades, UNH has coordinated the Campaign for Summer Jobs (CSJ), a partnership between providers, advocates, and young people that has pushed for expanded access to SYEP. Since 2020, CSJ has re-branded as the Campaign for Universal Summer Jobs (CUSJ) out of a recognition that SYEP not only provides young people with valuable exposure to work and different career opportunities, but also acts as a key economic support to low-income communities most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Year-over-year, SYEP receives roughly 150,000 applications from 14-to-24-year-olds interested in a summer job. Despite serving a record 75,000 in summer 2021, that still meant that roughly one in two young people who applied were turned away.

Pushing SYEP to serve 90,000 will help develop key infrastructure, bringing us that much closer to a program with universal access. Still, as we learned last summer with Summer Rising, increasing funding is not enough to make a major expansion successful. A push to increase SYEP by more than 25% over the course of a few months is going to take all hands on deck, and timing is essential. The Mayor's decision to increase funding for SYEP in the preliminary budget—and baseline that funding—was critical, and we applaud the Mayor and the Council for understanding that early, stable funding is key to the success of this initiative. Further, thoughtful, careful coordination from DYCD and the Mayor's Office of Youth Employment (MOYE) has made providers optimistic that the expansion will be a success.

DYCD and MOYE have spent the last several months conducting focus groups, having meetings with providers and other system stakeholders, and developing plans to alleviate the biggest systemic barriers to expansion. They have achieved major breakthroughs, with the implementation of new technology that brings the application/enrollment process online, promises to develop and distribute an audit manual to providers so that they can streamline their enrollment processes by knowing what to expect during audit time, eliminating familial income verification document collection during the enrollment process, and transitioning the program from contracts that bridge fiscal years to 12-month contracts that run from July 1 through June 30th.

While this list may sound tangential to SYEP success, each development represents a significant burden lifted for both providers and young people, meaning that—at scale—bureaucratic processes take less time and providers can focus more energy on cultivating stronger employer relationships to expand internship opportunities, training their own staff, and doing what they do best: Youth development. SYEP should be celebrated as an example of what can happen when Government, CBOs, advocates and youth align around a mutually-held goal and listen to each other to make achieving that goal possible. This model shows what is possible, and DYCD, the Mayor, and City Council should work to draw key lessons learned into work on summer programming for elementary and middle school.

Conclusion

The City has an opportunity to learn from Summer 2021 and ensure that the same operational challenges are not repeated for this summer. It is clear that the demand for summer programming is there, and that the current contracted DYCD summer programming network needs greater investments to scale up sustainably. We fear that the continued lack of investment in summer programming will exacerbate already existing crises in the field and rob the young people of NYC the opportunities to play, learn, and grow into successful adults, given that CBOs across the city would be unable to run quality programming.

There are still outstanding questions around the City's K-8 summer programming, and we hope that City provides information about the following as soon as possible:

- What is this summer's program model? How involved will the DOE be?
- How many students will providers be expected to serve this summer? How does that compare to current system capacity, and what steps will the City take to expand any capacity this summer?
- What rates will providers receive this summer?
- What school buildings will providers operate in this summer? When can providers expect to know that?
- Who will manage the background check process for staff? What timeframe will the City commit to for processing those background checks?
- When can providers expect to be fully paid out for their work on Summer Rising in 2021?
- Can DYCD review the timeframe for this summer's program and when and how families and providers should expect communication on important programming milestones?

Without these services, our city's young people will pay the highest price despite having survived a pandemic for so long.

If there is a commitment to the continued full recovery for New York City post-pandemic, then there must be a substantial increase to the city's financial commitment to the human services workforce - especially our youth-facing professionals. Without these actions, the City risks unnecessary harm to youth and their communities in a time when their priority should be recovery from the harrowing consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify today. For more information, or to answer any additional questions, you can reach me at dbravo@unhny.org. Attached to this testimony are two sample budgets for a summer program, as well as UNH's Summer Rising Debrief report from October 2021.

Mock In Person Fee for Service Summer 2022 Budget
Elementary

Summer Budget 07/1/22-08/31/22

Budget is based off of 100 students total in a program.
Assumes current SACC 10:1 ratio

Does not incorporate potential SYEP workers. Several providers noted a preference to have 18+ SYEP students working in a program, and all have stated that SYEP workers cannot be a replacement for trained staff

Personnel	Contract Title	Annual/Hourly Salary		Percent/ No. of Hours	No. of Staff	Total Salary	
Full-Time Staff							
Department Director	Program Supervisor	\$ 110,000.00		2%	1	\$2,200.00	
Program Director	Program Director	\$ 60,000.00		17%	1	\$10,200.00	
Fiscal	Budget Analyst	\$ 33,660.00		10%	1.00	\$572.22	
Total Full-Time Staff						\$12,972.22	
Part-Time Staff							
Data Specialist/Floater	Counselor	\$ 21.00	350 program hours plus an additional 25 hours PD, Orientation	375	1.00	\$7,875.00	
Counselor	Counselor	\$ 21.00		375	5.00	\$39,375.00	
Activity Specialist	Activity Specialist	\$ 25.00		375	5.00	\$46,875.00	
Education Specialist	Education Specialist	\$ 50.00		100	1.00	\$5,000.00	
Total Part-Time Staff						\$99,125.00	
Fringe Benefits FT 26%						\$3,113.33	
Fringe Benefits PT 16%						\$15,860.00	
Total Fringe						\$18,973.33	
Total Personnel						\$131,070.55	
Office Supplies						\$2,500.00	
Safety and Health/PPE Supplies						FREE	
Fingerprints and Clearances							UNKNOWN
Staff Transportation						\$120.00	
Staff Training						\$1,800.00	
CPR Training						\$1,200.00	
Postage						\$600.00	
Liability, Property, and Other Insurance						\$2,500.00	
Printing						\$500.00	
Youth Transportation						\$5,000.00	10 busses
Trip Admission						\$2,000.00	\$20 per child
Youth Supplies & Activities (special event, admission)						\$15,000.00	Single kits to reduce sharing among children (150*100=15000)
Prepared Meals						\$1,500.00	
Raw Food						\$2,500.00	
Mobile Phones						\$1,000.00	
Accounting Costs						\$500.00	
Audit Expense						\$250.00	
Total Personnel						\$131,070.55	
Total OTPS						\$36,970.00	
Total Personnel and OTPS						\$168,040.55	
Total Indirect (standard 10%)						\$16,804.06	
Total Budget						\$184,844.61	
						\$1,848.45	Price Per Participant

**Mock In Person Fee for Service Summer 2022 Budget
Middle School**

Summer Budget 07/1/22-08/31/22

Budget is based off of 100 students total in a program.

Assumes current 15:1 ratio

Does not incorporate potential SYEP workers. Several providers noted a preference to have 18+ SYEP students working in a program, and all have stated that SYEP workers cannot be a replacement for trained staff

Personnel	Contract Title	Annual/Hourly Salary		Percent/ No. of Hours	No. of Staff	Total Salary	
Full-Time Staff							
Department Director	Program Supervisor	\$ 110,000.00		2%	1	\$2,200.00	
Program Director	Program Director	\$ 60,000.00		17%	1	\$10,200.00	
Fiscal	Budget Analyst	\$ 33,660.00		10%	1.00	\$572.22	
Total Full-Time Staff						\$12,972.22	
Part-Time Staff							
Data Specialist/Floater	Counselor	\$ 21.00	108 program hours plus an	133	1.00	\$2,793.00	
Counselor	Counselor	\$ 21.00	additional 25 hours PD,	133	3.00	\$8,379.00	
Activity Specialist	Activity Specialist	\$ 25.00	Orientation	133	4.00	\$13,300.00	
Education Specialist	Education Specialist	\$ 50.00		100	1.00	\$5,000.00	
Total Part-Time Staff						\$29,472.00	
Fringe Benefits FT 26%						\$3,113.33	
Fringe Benefits PT 16%						\$4,715.52	
Total Fringe						\$7,828.85	
Total Personnel						\$50,273.07	
Office Supplies						\$2,500.00	
Safety and Health/PPE Supplies						FREE	
Fingerprints and Clearances							UNKNOWN
Staff Transportation						\$120.00	
Staff Training						\$1,800.00	
CPR Training						\$1,200.00	
Postage						\$600.00	
Liability, Property, and Other Insurance						\$2,500.00	
Printing						\$500.00	
Youth Transportation						\$5,000.00	10 busses
Trip Admission						\$2,000.00	\$20 per child
Youth Supplies & Activities (special event, admission)						\$15,000.00	Single kits to reduce sharing among children (150*100=15000)
Prepared Meals						\$1,500.00	
Raw Food						\$2,500.00	
Mobile Phones						\$1,000.00	
Accounting Costs						\$500.00	
Audit Expense						\$250.00	
Total Personnel						\$50,273.07	
Total OTPS						\$36,970.00	
Total Personnel and OTPS						\$87,243.07	
Total Indirect						\$8,724.31	
Total Budget						\$95,967.38	
						\$959.67	Price Per Participant



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Summer Rising Debrief and Feedback from United Neighborhood Houses October 2021

Introduction

United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is a policy and social change organization representing 45 settlement houses, 40 in New York City, 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 youth development.

In addition to our settlement house members and the communities they serve, UNH works with other organizations and advocacy groups outside our membership, through the Neighborhood Family Services (NFS) Roundtable and advocacy campaigns. The NFS Roundtable is a coalition of youth-serving advocates and providers, composed of UNH settlement house members and non-UNH members, who work together –guided and supported by UNH—to promote the provision of high-quality, accessible, and affordable youth development programs.

This debrief focuses on the significant challenges that the City's community-based organizations who support children and youth have faced while facilitating the 2021 Summer Rising program and makes recommendations for strengthened support and partnership with the CBO sector—which will be crucial to ensure the success of any future city-wide summer programming.¹

Program Background

On April 13, 2021, Mayor de Blasio announced the new Summer Rising program, which would act as a bridge to bring young people and their families out of their homes and into school buildings to provide academic, social, and emotional support and enrichment, and ease families into the return to in-person instruction later in the fall. The program was envisioned as a partnership between the Department of Education (DOE) and Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) contracted community-based organizations (CBOs).

Mayor de Blasio declared that Summer Rising would be “an end to summer school as we know it.” Instead of running separate summer camp programs and remedial academic instruction for the young

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people who were Promotion in Doubt (also known as “PID”), this program would blend both academic and socio-emotional learning and offer wraparound services (including mental health supports), all under a partnership between local schools and CBOs. The Mayor announced that Summer Rising would serve 200,000 students from grades K-12, more than in previous summers and a number that is significantly larger than the number of youth served in DYCD-funded summer programs each year, which averaged about 90,000-100,000 youth participants in pre-pandemic fiscal years.

However, there were significant operational and fiscal challenges that made it difficult for CBO providers to carry out programming. This document details these challenges and some of the experiences of CBO providers operating Summer Rising programs and makes recommendations on how to best move forward during the school year and beyond to ensure that CBOs have the right resources to focus on what they do best: serving young people and their families.

Program Preparation and Rollout

CBO providers identified operational issues that would be crucial to the success of Summer Rising in April.

- Guidelines would need to be in place to detail how local schools and their CBO partners would work together.
- Enrollment had to be coordinated between DYCD contractors and the DOE.
- Protocols would need to be put in place to reserve spaces for students who were PID and therefore needed to attend Summer Rising.
- Guidance would be needed on how to handle COVID-19 issues.
- Enough school buildings would need to remain open to avoid co-location of several programs in one building (a practice utilized in previous summers) and to follow social distancing guidelines.
- Clear regulatory guidelines would be needed to ensure that CBOs had the right type of licenses to operate programs, and that licenses reflected the increased number of youth participating in the program.
- The background check process for new and existing staff would need to be efficient.
- Crucially, CBOs would need enough funding to hire new staff, especially to comply with small student: staff ratios and social distancing guidelines due to COVID, and to follow any other COVID-safety protocols.

While CBOs recognized that this was a new program and they would need to be flexible, many of the above operational issues were addressed slowly over the three months before the program started.

When the program was announced on April 13, DYCD instructed providers to develop a program work scope in conjunction with their partner school principals, despite having very little information about what was expected and without clarity on exactly what hours the school and CBO would be staffing the program (whether it was a full day from 8 am - 6 pm or split between the two entities). Providers were encouraged to finish these work scopes so that families could start enrolling two weeks later on April 26. This left little time for CBOs to meet with and plan with their school partners, who also were working in a new way.

CBOs were not told exactly which regulatory framework they would operate under until DYCD released its Summer Rising operations manual on June 9. When a CBO operates a summer program generally,

they must have either a School Aged Child Care (SACC) license or an Article 47 Summer Camp license. Both licenses have strict health and safety guidelines, staffing ratios, and caps on the number of children served, and dictate much about how a program is run. Changes can be made to the licenses to serve more children, but this is typically a time-consuming process. Furthermore, the type of license dictates what background check a potential staffer must receive.² The lack of planning caused providers undue stress as they worried whether they would have to scramble to update licenses and clear staff through the lengthy Comprehensive Background Check process. Furthermore, the PETS³ system for background checks experienced backlogs, glitches, and delays, causing providers to struggle to get staff properly vetted before working in programs. CBOs needed to have DOE or DYCD address these critical operational issues.

In order to serve the number of students that Mayor de Blasio said would participate in Summer Rising (200,000 students), the DYCD-contracted network, which is not universal and is largely comprised of after-school providers, would need to expand significantly to serve a greater number of youth. In previous summers, DYCD-contracted programs served approximately 90,000-100,000 students. CBO providers were asked to scale up their programs significantly, despite challenges around funding, staffing, licensure, etc. DYCD did provide additional funding for providers who chose to serve more students, but the short timeframe for scale up was a challenge. Additionally, since the program was not bound by school enrollment, providers were required to enroll youth that do not necessarily attend that school site in the academic year. This caused some tension with principals who wanted to serve and prioritize their own students.

Staffing also remained a significant challenge throughout the program preparation and program start. Summer Rising required staffing from the hours of 8am–6 pm, which meant CBOs need a higher volume of staff than what they would normally use in traditional summer programming, despite having operated short-staffed for most of the school year. Staff burn-out, backlogs of clearances, and unstable funding streams added additional strain to CBOs and their dwindling workforce.

An additional challenge for on-the-ground operations was the fact that DYCD and DOE sent separate guidance to CBO leaders and principals, despite the overall messaging that Summer Rising was to be an integrated program. DYCD issued its own Summer Rising Operations guide, which was not released until June 9, less than a month before the program was supposed to start. CBOs reported sharing their guidance and updates from DYCD with their principals, only to find that their principals had received separate guidance from the DOE; time then had to be spent reconciling the two.

Budget and Funding

Even though Summer Rising was announced to be a new and unique program and the City had federal stimulus funding from the American Rescue Plan, CBOs were told when the program was announced that their funding levels would remain flat.

² The Comprehensive Background Check Process, which was newly rolled out in 2019, is required of all staff working under SACC licenses. The CBC process is extremely time consuming and takes a long period of time to be approved; in fall 2019 there was a staffing crisis at many after school programs because the CBC process was so slow that there were not enough cleared staff to work in after school programs.

³ PETS is the Personnel Eligibility Tracking System that the DOE uses to fingerprint prospective staff.

Summer Rising would only be funded at a rate of \$1088 per Elementary student and \$600 per middle school student. However, a group of CBOs assembled a model budget that showed that CBOs needed rates closer to \$1700 per Elementary student and \$925 per middle school student in order to operate safe and effective programs. After advocacy efforts led by UNH and CBO providers, the City initially notified providers on June 10 of a 3% increase in budgets, which amounted to about an extra \$32 per elementary student and \$18 per middle school student (based on a program of 100 students; see end of report for model budget). This small raise was wholly insufficient and would not begin to cover increased costs of running a larger program during a pandemic. UNH and CBOs continued to make clear to the Mayor and the City Council that additional funding was needed, and in late June, the FY22 Adopted Budget included an additional \$24 million for Summer Rising, with every DYCD contract receiving a 30% increase in their budgets. Though this was less than what was needed, it did help ease the financial constraints of CBOs.

Program Start

One of the biggest challenges that CBOs faced in implementing Summer Rising happened on June 30, when DOE principals were notified that all schools should plan to serve all students interested in their site's program, even if those students were on the site's waitlist or were not even enrolled. This was later confirmed by DYCD, and Mayor de Blasio subsequently encouraged enrollment for all students at his daily press briefings. While we applaud the Mayor for envisioning this program to be accessible, free for families, and high quality, this announcement created an unprecedented pressure on CBOs to serve more youth when many of their sites were already at capacity. This announcement was particularly troubling because DYCD providers are typically contracted with the City for a specific number of slots to serve students; the providers plan their staffing numbers based on their contracted slots, so that they can abide by staffing ratios set forth by the City. Without the ability to turn away youth once they were at capacity, providers knew they were running the risk of having more youth on site in their programs than they could safely manage at one time.

During the first week of Summer Rising, many of the concerns that CBOs had raised for several weeks about over-enrollment issues and unclear expectations between DOE schools and CBOs came to pass. Because of the DOE's last-minute announcement that all children could effectively go to their home school for a Summer Rising program even if they were not already enrolled, several CBOs reported parents dropping off their children, assuming their child would automatically have a seat. They were surprised and frustrated to find that the CBO partner still needed basic enrollment information.

Furthermore, several CBOs reported continued confusion between the CBO and the school partner regarding enrollment lists. Providers reported that the influx of new youth in the first few days of the program with no common enrollment list between DOE and DYCD created many dangerous situations for student participants. Multiple CBOs struggled with not having basic knowledge on day 1 around medical conditions like allergies or asthma or a student's grade level. These enrollment challenges also led to significant administrative burden in the first few days of the program. Site leaders - despite some of their sites being understaffed and overenrolled - needed to spend time walking families through enrollment processes and making sure all correct paperwork was in place.

To make up for the lack of staffing on the CBO side, the Department of Education made a pool of paraprofessional substitute teachers available to help with the morning academic section of the day

as more and more young people enrolled in Summer Rising. However, this was only a stopgap solution as these paraprofessional substitute teachers were technically DOE employees, and not necessarily accountable to the on-site CBO, sometimes making it difficult to manage staff effectively. Despite the pool of substitute teachers being made available, some sites still were not able to follow staffing ratios every day of the program. Providers also noted that there was not enough DOE staff for the 8-11am portion of the program—contrary to what Mayor de Blasio said—and that there was constant miscommunication over where staff were supposed to be throughout the day.

Some CBOs also witnessed slow paraprofessional support for children with Individualized Educational Plans (IEP), which put an even greater onus on CBO group leaders to support these young people without the required resources, tools, or even background knowledge of what support their participants needed. For example, one staff member spoke of a group leader who asked their supervisor for support in engaging a non-verbal student because that student had no other support aside from the understaffed CBO workers.

Ultimately, providers and schools addressed most operational challenges in the first few weeks of the program. While Summer Rising ended with no reported serious incidents, CBOs are concerned that this program could create a precedent where a rush to have universal access comes at the expense of safety and quality measures instead of becoming central pieces of a summer program's foundation.

Recommendations for Future Summers

The City has an opportunity to learn from Summer Rising and ensure that the same operational challenges are not repeated in the future. The demand for summer programming is there, and the current DYCD summer programming network needs greater investments to scale up sustainably.

First and foremost, planning for a summer program - especially a city-wide program - needs to begin as **early as the winter of that school year**, ideally even sooner than that. Without beginning plans during the winter, the City cannot hope for a robust, high-quality program summer program. A crucial first step is to baseline all funding for summer programming in the January Preliminary Budget to avoid these operational challenges going forward.

The following are recommendations based on more specific areas of growth from Summer 2021:

1. Fund programs early and adequately - Any funding for summer programming must be included in the Preliminary Budget; any time later than that is too late to adequately plan. Furthermore, the model budget process carried out by UNH and CBOs underscores that summer programs are underfunded, and need resources, especially more funding to pay better wages to staff.
2. Have a coordinated office to manage regulatory issues - There are many agencies involved in a successful summer program—DYCD funds and supports CBOs to carry out high quality programming, DOE sites those programs and, in the case of Summer Rising, offers academic enrichment, and DOHMH licenses programs and conducts staff background checks. It is crucial that these three agencies coordinate timelines and workloads in the winter and spring so that the contracting, siting, licensing, staffing, and background check process is coordinated and less chaotic.
3. Pair schools and CBOs in a thoughtful and intentional way - School matches with CBOs must take place as early as possible and with coordinated communication between both DYCD and

DOE. Before siting summer programs, the City should analyze neighborhoods to understand local demand and expand CBO capacity accordingly. Finally, the City should strive to match school and CBO partners that already have an existing relationship. If it is a new partnership, that pairing should be made by the winter to give both parties time to plan and prepare.

4. Set realistic enrollment targets and improve the enrollment process - When Mayor de Blasio encouraged parents to sign up in early July, program infrastructure was already maxed out well before the enrollment cut-off date. Many providers were pleading to stop new enrollments as they were at capacity. Going forward the City needs better infrastructure to meet demand and direct families towards sites that can give them service. This includes the following:
 - The enrollment process must be clear and simple for families. Several settlement houses reported having to walk families through the discoverDYCD application process and provide office hours to assist families. There also must be paper application forms for those who need it, and all materials should be translated into multiple languages.
 - There should be a registration deadline for families before the program starts, so that CBOs can prepare for the number of youth they are serving. Additionally, if a site is at capacity prior to program start, there should be processes in place for CBOs to refer families to programs that still have seats available, to ensure that every family is served.
 - Both school and CBO partners should be working off one coordinated enrollment list.
 - CBO staff must be compensated for time spent enrolling families in summer programs.
5. Ensure safe staffing - The recruitment and onboarding process can be time consuming for CBOs hiring staff to work in summer programs. If summer program planning begins in the winter months, programs can also take the time to staff their programs well and train their staff to deliver high quality services, thereby decreasing the need to rely on paraprofessional substitute teachers. Wages must also be competitive for staff working in CBO programs.
6. Improve the fingerprinting and staff clearances process - Since the implementation of the Comprehensive Background Check process in 2019, background check turnaround times for CBO staff working in youth-serving programs has lagged, leading to staffing challenges in programs. Though Summer Rising solely utilized the PETS system, this also experienced delays and glitches for CBO staff. Early planning for programs, combined with increased capacity within City agencies to process these clearances, can alleviate this issue.
7. Support children with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) - One-on-one paraprofessionals must be made available to any child with an IEP. CBOs also should be notified when a child in their program has an IEP, rather than putting the burden on the family to share that information with the CBO. In addition, one-on-one paraprofessional staff must be treated as paraprofessionals, not group leaders/adults that count towards staffing ratios.
8. Pay on time - It is crucial that the City register contracts and reimburse providers in a timely fashion in order for them to operate summer programs. At the time of writing this debrief, providers still have yet to be reimbursed for their work in Summer Rising.

While UNH and its members applaud the city for choosing to reimagine summer programming to support our young people holistically, there are important lessons to be learned from Summer Rising to ensure that next summer is successful.

Model Budget

Model In Person Fee for Service Summer 2021 Budget						
Elementary						
Summer Budget 07/1/21-08/31/21						
Budget is based off of 100 students total in a program.						
Assumes that current 10:1 ratio due to COVID is still in place (current ratio for Learning Labs)						
Does not incorporate potential SYEP workers. Several providers noted a preference to have 18+ SYEP students working in a program, and there has not been written guidance yet from DYCD on how SYEP students would work in the program and whether they would need to be fingerprinted						
Personnel	Contract Title	Annual/Hourly Salary		Percent /No. of Hours	No. of Staff	Total Salary
Full-Time Staff						
Department Director	Program Supervisor	\$ 110,000.00		2%	1	\$2,200.00
Program Director	Program Director	\$ 60,000.00		17%	1	\$10,200.00
Fiscal	Budget Analyst	\$ 33,660.00		10%	1.00	\$572.22
Total Full-Time Staff						\$12,972.22
Part-Time Staff						
Data Specialist/Floater	Counselor	\$ 16.00	350 program hours plus an additional 25 hours PD, Orientation	375	1.00	\$6,000.00
Counselor	Counselor	\$ 16.00		375	5.00	\$30,000.00
Activity Specialist	Activity Specialist	\$ 25.00		375	5.00	\$46,875.00
Education Specialist	Education Specialist	\$ 50.00		100	1.00	\$5,000.00
Total Part-Time Staff						\$87,875.00
Fringe Benefits FT 26%						\$3,113.33
Fringe Benefits PT 16%						\$14,060.00
Total Fringe						\$17,173.33
Total Personnel						\$118,020.55
Office Supplies						\$2,500.00
Safety and Health/PPE Supplies						FREE
Fingerprints and Clearances						UNKNOWN
Staff Transportation						\$120.00
Staff Training						\$1,800.00
CPR Training						\$1,200.00
Postage						\$600.00
Liability, Property, and Other Insurance						\$2,500.00
Printing						\$500.00
Youth Transportation						\$5,000.00 10 busses
Trip Admission						\$2,000.00 \$20 per child
Youth Supplies & Activities (special event, admission)						\$15,000.00 Single kits to reduce sharing among children (150*100=15000)
Prepared Meals						\$1,500.00
Raw Food						\$2,500.00
Mobile Phones						\$1,000.00
Accounting Costs						\$500.00
Audit Expense						\$250.00
Total Personnel						\$118,020.55
Total OTPS						\$36,970.00
Total Personnel and OTPS						\$154,990.55
Total Indirect (standard 10%)						\$15,499.06
Total Budget						\$170,489.61
						\$1,704.90 Price Per Participant

Model In Person Fee for Service Summer 2021 Budget						
Middle School						
Summer Budget 07/1/21-08/31/21						
Budget is based off of 100 students total in a program.						
Assumes that current 15:1 ratio due to COVID is still in place (current ratio for Learning Labs)						
Does not incorporate potential SYEP workers. Several providers noted a preference to have 18+ SYEP students working in a program, and there has not been written guidance yet from DYCD on how SYEP students would work in						
Personnel	Contract Title	Annual/Hourly Salary		Percent /No. of Hours	No. of Staff	Total Salary
Full-Time Staff						
Department Director	Program Supervisor	\$ 110,000.00		2%	1	\$2,200.00
Program Director	Program Director	\$ 60,000.00		17%	1	\$10,200.00
Fiscal	Budget Analyst	\$ 33,660.00		10%	1.00	\$572.22
Total Full-Time Staff						\$12,972.22
Part-Time Staff						
Data Specialist/Floater	Counselor	\$ 16.00	108 program hours plus an additional 25 hours PD, Orientation	133	1.00	\$2,128.00
Counselor	Counselor	\$ 16.00		133	3.00	\$6,384.00
Activity Specialist	Activity Specialist	\$ 25.00		133	4.00	\$13,300.00
Education Specialist	Education Specialist	\$ 50.00		100	1.00	\$5,000.00
Total Part-Time Staff						\$26,812.00
Fringe Benefits FT 26%						\$3,113.33
Fringe Benefits PT 16%						\$4,289.92
Total Fringe						\$7,403.25
Total Personnel						\$47,187.47
Office Supplies						\$2,500.00
Safety and Health/PPE Supplies						FREE
Fingerprints and Clearances						UNKNOWN
Staff Transportation						\$120.00
Staff Training						\$1,800.00
CPR Training						\$1,200.00
Postage						\$600.00
Liability, Property, and Other Insurance						\$2,500.00
Printing						\$500.00
Youth Transportation						\$5,000.00 10 busses
Trip Admission						\$2,000.00 \$20 per child
Youth Supplies & Activities (special event, admission)						\$15,000.00 (150*100=15000) Single kits to reduce sharing among children
Prepared Meals						\$1,500.00
Raw Food						\$2,500.00
Mobile Phones						\$1,000.00
Accounting Costs						\$500.00
Audit Expense						\$250.00
Total Personnel						\$47,187.47
Total OTPS						\$36,970.00
Total Personnel and OTPS						\$84,157.47
Total Indirect						\$8,415.75
Total Budget						\$92,573.22
						\$925.73 Price Per Participant