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UNH City Fiscal Year 2020 Budget & Policy Priorities **Bridge Programs**

Bridge Programs – Bridge programs are career-focused adult education courses that help to “skill up” jobseekers, bolstering their education and qualifications for a particular sector simultaneously. Depending on the particular career path on which they focus, and the type of adult education they provide, they can take many forms. Some may teach English to speakers of other languages while preparing them for a career in healthcare, while others might use culinary skills to help students better understand math and science. Bridge programs are the best path to a middle-skill job with a living wage for New Yorkers who lack English proficiency and/or academic credentials who are unemployed and unable to find work with a dignified wage. Examples of successful bridge programs include:

- Tech Bridge, a partnership between Per Scholas and The Door, that provides basic adult education and literacy services for young adult applicants to Per Scholas’ job training and placement program to upskill them in order to qualify while introducing them to beginner tech concepts; and
- LaGuardia Community College’s Bridge to College and Careers, offering students high school equivalency (HSE) prep courses that are contextualized in the student’s preferred topic area of healthcare, science, or business and give them a “leg up” in future studies of that topic area while connecting them to a career.

Challenge and Opportunity – The de Blasio Administration published the *Career Pathways* in 2015, in which they promised a \$60 million annual investment in bridge programs by FY 2020 to ensure that “the lowest-skilled jobseekers” were not left behind as New York City’s economy grew. The report acknowledged the importance of programs that help workers transition to better jobs than those for which they are currently qualified, but since releasing the report the City has failed to invest the promised funds.

The FY 2020 Preliminary Budget fails to commit the promised funds, keeping the resources for bridge programming about level with previous years at \$7 million. **UNH recommends the Administration follow through with its promise, investing \$60 million in baselined funding for bridge programs. 75% of these funds should be for new programs competitively bid out to non-profit community-based organizations.**

Benefits of Bridge Programs –As *Career Pathways* acknowledges, “a large share of workforce system clients, including an estimated 20 to 25 percent of HRA’s Back to Work clients, 40 to 50 percent of DYCD’s Out-Of-School Youth clients, and 20 to 30 percent of adult clients served by DYCD” lack the skills they need to get middle-skill jobs. These are exactly the types of people who would most benefit from bridge programming. This investment would go a long way towards securing the vision of New York City as “the fairest big city in America.”

UNH recommendation: Follow through on Career Pathways promise to invest \$60m annually in bridge programs in FY 2020, and commit to including new funding in order to expand programming across New York City.

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