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UNH City Fiscal Year 2020 Budget & Policy Priorities NYCHA Community Spaces

NYCHA Community Spaces – In addition to the 400,000 New Yorkers that live in housing developments managed by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), NYCHA also manages sites that are home to more than 250 non-profit run community centers, child care centers, and senior centers. Unfortunately, after years of Federal and State divestment, NYCHA has an immense capital improvement backlog, and as their building portfolio has deteriorated, the nonprofits that run programs out of these community spaces have faced increasing challenges partnering with NYCHA in order to maintain their centers.

UNH represents 24 settlement houses that operate nearly 200 programs out of 125 different NYCHA-based sites, serving approximately 250,000 individuals who live in and around NYCHA housing. These centers are a critical lifeline for NYCHA residents and provide vital services that keep these communities affordable, allow older people to age in place, improve quality of life, and provide residents with services that connect them to jobs, healthcare, and community.

Challenge and Opportunity – These community spaces are at risk. As NYCHA has faced increasing financial challenges, it has been more difficult for them to respond to everyday maintenance needs, forcing the nonprofits that run these centers to divert scarce time and resources to maintenance work or risk facing an onslaught of fines and citations from the City’s regulatory agencies that regularly inspect these spaces. Nonprofits have taken on a long list of maintenance tasks, including:

- Janitorial work
- Painting, including controlling chipping or flaking paint
- Replacing ceiling and floor tiles after a leak or flood
- Lighting maintenance and repairs
- Plumbing maintenance and repairs
- Alarm system maintenance and repairs
- Regular extermination services
- HVAC maintenance and repairs

In order to capture the true costs of this maintenance, staffing costs must be included as well. UNH has conducted a study of our members and found that **the average center costs nonprofits approximately \$100,000 of their own funds annually to maintain**, with some larger centers or stand-alone community centers costing as much as \$300,000-400,000. Contracts with city agencies including the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), Administration for Children Services (ACS), Department of Education (DOE), and the Department for the Aging (DFTA) for community, child care, and senior centers respectively should be adjusted to include adequate maintenance funding to ensure these centers are able to continue operating uninterrupted.

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It is critical that the City Agencies that contract nonprofits to provide services out of NYCHA-based community spaces acknowledge the ongoing facility maintenance that they have taken on to keep their programs running. In an environment where hundreds of children, young adults, or older adults rely on early childhood education programs, after school, senior meals and recreation services, NYCHA's 30 day average turnaround time for repair requests is insufficient. While waiting for NYCHA to make repairs, some centers have been forced to close and others have had their operating licenses revoked, interrupting services for the entire community. As a result, the nonprofits that manage NYCHA-based community centers have been forced to hire custodial staff and bring in expensive contractors to bypass NYCHA's bureaucracy to get the work done.

With NYCHA's financial situation, there appears to be no end in sight for this arrangement, and it's time that the **City agencies that have contracted these nonprofits compensate them for necessary maintenance and repairs at these sites that keep the doors open and programs running.** Nonprofits cannot continue to spend tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars of their own funding annually just to cover this gap when they desperately need those dollars to go towards program improvements and innovation, raises for hard-working and dedicated staff, or increasing program capacity.

UNH recommendation: Contracts with city agencies including the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), Administration for Children Services (ACS), Department of Education (DOE), and the Department for the Aging (DFTA) for community, child care, and senior centers respectively should be adjusted to include adequate maintenance funding to ensure these centers are able to continue operating uninterrupted.