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United Neighborhood Houses Statement on Summer Youth Program Funding in the New York City FY2021 Budget

City must work with providers for summer programs to be successful

NEW YORK – July 1, 2020 – In response to the New York City budget agreement, UNH Executive Director Susan Stamler commented:

“When the Mayor eliminated summer youth programs in his Executive Budget, the burden fell hardest on young people, particularly young people of color, and the workforce that serves them. Last night, the City finally adopted a budget to ensure that the children and teens who benefit from these programs can access the support they need to continue learning and working this summer. Young people never should have been put in this situation to begin with, and it is shameful that the Mayor saw these programs as an opportunity to save money. We thank our partners in the City Council for denouncing this budget cut, for understanding the devastation it would have caused, and for fighting to restore \$115 million in funds for 100,000 youth and their families.

“However, passing the budget less than a week before summer programs usually begin cost settlement houses critical preparation time and forced providers to lay off or furlough thousands of staff. At a time when youth services staff should have been focused solely on helping families recover from COVID-19’s devastation, they instead were left facing unemployment. Given this extremely late announcement, the City must be flexible and collaborative as providers work fast to launch these programs in a way that retains their quality and impact.

“Yesterday, the Mayor stated that he will not consider ‘layoffs and furloughs so we can take from our public workforce, which is the essence of how we keep the City going and turn that money over to a nonprofit.’ While the Mayor has made investments in human services during his administration, he refuses to see nonprofit workers as truly essential. These staff risked their health and safety to keep families supported during the COVID-19 pandemic. We invite the Mayor to meet with these staff to understand how much hard work they have put in to ‘keep the city going’ over the last few months.

“This budget agreement is a small step towards prioritizing the education and support of young people instead of policing them, but more must be done. To begin to break the cycles of racism that New York City has seen for decades, we must continue to invest in youth—particularly young people of color—by providing them with more opportunities to learn and work. This conversation must continue beyond this budget, and we commit ourselves to this work moving forward.”

About United Neighborhood Houses

United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is a policy and social change organization representing 43 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/>.

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