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NYC Executive Budget: More Must be Done to Support New Yorkers and the Nonprofits That Serve Them

Now more than ever, New York City must invest in its community infrastructure to keep our communities strong. UNH calls on the Mayor and City Council to ensure that the Adopted Budget fully funds human services contracts that support programs for all New Yorkers.

**Nonprofit Funding**

New York City’s human services nonprofits—the organizations the City relies upon to provide services to New Yorkers of all generations—are at a crisis point. Due primarily to longstanding underfunded government contracts, many nonprofits operate with deficits and struggle to make payroll and pay rent. The Mayor has acknowledged this problem by convening a Nonprofit Resiliency Committee on which UNH serves and must now begin to address this problem in the City’s FY18 budget.

Sadly, the Mayor’s Executive Budget takes no significant action to provide relief and address this crisis. This failure to act will hurt services for all New Yorkers. UNH has joined with more than 200 other organizations to call on the Mayor to make an across-the-board investment to adequately fund human services contracts. The City’s leaders must take action in the Adopted Budget to address this crisis.

**Older Adults**

UNH is deeply disappointed that the Executive Budget once again overlooks older adults and ignores the need for increased investment in supportive services to help them age in place. This neglect comes at a time when waitlists for case management and homecare services continue to rise and glaring disparities in senior center funding leave many neighborhood centers barely surviving. The Executive Budget fails to restore more than $13 million in services for older adults that were funded by the City Council in FY 2017. These are critical services that save the City money by helping older adults stay in their homes and neighborhoods rather than being forced to move into nursing homes or hospitals. However, the funding is trapped in a budget dance and providers are forced to depend on one-year allocations from the City Council to fund core services such as senior centers, NORCs, homecare, and case management. UNH urges the Mayor to baseline funding for core services for older adults so that programs they depend upon have the stability to remain strong and continue providing vital services for this population.

**Adult Literacy and Immigrant Legal Services**

UNH is also deeply disappointed that the Mayor failed to renew and baseline $12 million in funding for adult literacy classes that serve immigrants and other adult learners. In this political climate, Mayor de Blasio must reinstate funding for community based adult literacy classes for nearly 6,000 New Yorkers, the majority of whom are immigrants seeking to build their English skills. Currently one third of NYC’s adult population struggles with limited English proficiency skills and/or the lack of a high school diploma, including 1.5 million immigrants. Adult Literacy classes provide safe spaces for immigrants to come together to build community and work on developing the English skills they need to succeed in our labor market and integrate into the City.

Mayor de Blasio and the City Council took meaningful action last year to support these New Yorkers with a $12 million investment in adult literacy classes, but the Mayor’s decision to not renew the funding means thousands of individuals will lose access to their classes by the end of June.

While UNH embraces the Mayor’s proposal to increase funding for essential immigrant legal services, we urge him to also stay true to his vision for a more equitable City. While legal services will help immigrants stay in the United States, adult literacy programs are what help immigrants thrive. UNH hopes that with leadership from Council Speaker Mark-Viverito, Finance Chair Ferreras-Copeland, and Immigration Chair Menchaca, the City Council and Mayor will reach an agreement in the final budget that honors baselines funding for adult literacy programs.

**Youth Employment**

Over the past 17 years, UNH has been led advocacy for expanding the Summer Youth Employment Program which offers summer jobs to youth between the ages of 14-24. The baselined 65,000 jobs in the Preliminary Budget is a great step forward for program stability and expansion, and we are encouraged that Mayor de Blasio proposed funding SYEP minimum wage increases in the coming summer. UNH is committed to ensuring that SYEP is a valuable and fulfilling experience for New York City’s youth and looks forward to working with City Council and the administration to outline a path toward sustainable expansion of SYEP.

Going forward, the City should increase funding for youth employment, especially for programs benefiting youth who are out of school and out of work (OSOW). There are approximately 140,000 OSOW youth who could be served by these programs, but the City funds programs for fewer than 7,000.

In addition, we look forward to working with City Council and the administration to baseline and expand Work, Learn and Grow (WLG), a program that offers workforce experience during the school year for former SYEP participants. As part of this expansion, WLG should serve at least 12,000 youth, be truly year-round (including summer), and offer jobs for OSOW youth.

**After-School and Summer Programs**

UNH appreciates Mayor de Blasio’s investment in after-school programs including new investments in Beacon Community Centers and SONYC after-school programs for middle school students. This funding will help the City maintain the Mayor’s promise of an after-school program for every middle school student who wants one in the face of the loss of State and federal funding for after-school programs.

However, more must be done to stabilize and expand after-school programs in New York City including baselining funding for a summer component for every after-school participant. In the Adopted Budget, the City must also restore funding for after-school programs for 9,000 elementary school children whose programs are funded with one-year allocations by the City Council and ensure that funding continues to grow to meet the need of children in elementary school.

**Early Childhood Education**

UNH’s members—New York City’s settlement houses—will be a crucial part of the Mayor’s plan to expand pre-kindergarten programs to serve every 3-year-old in New York City by 2021. To make 3-K for All a success, the City must make it part of a high-quality, comprehensive system of early childhood education with well-trained staff who are compensated fairly, hours of operation that meet the needs of working families, and contracts which fund the true cost of care.

*UNH, founded in 1919, is the membership organization of 38 New York City settlement houses and community centers. UNH member organizations comprise of one of the largest human service systems in New York City and provide high quality services at more than 600 sites to more than a half million New Yorkers each year.* [*www.unhny.org*](http://www.unhny.org)