

70 West 36th Street, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10018-8007

Phone: (212) 967-0322 Fax: (212) 967-0792

www.unhny.org

**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses**

**Before the New York City Council**

**Committee on Contracts**

**Honorable Helen Rosenthal, Chair**

**Presented by Gregory Brender**

**Co-Director of Policy & Advocacy**

**March 7, 2017**

Good afternoon Chair Rosenthal and members of the New York City Council Committee on Cotnracts for the opportunity to testify. I am here on behalf of United Neighborhood Houses, New York City’s federation of settlement houses and community centers. Rooted in the history and values of the settlement house movement begun over 100 years ago, UNH promotes and strengthens the neighborhood-based, multiservice approach to improving the lives of New Yorkers in need and the communities in which they live. UNH’s membership includes 37 organizations employing 10,000 people at more than 600 sites across the five boroughs to provide high quality services and activities to over 500,000 New Yorkers each year. Settlement house provide a broad range of services including early childhood education, after-school programs, youth employment programs, adult literacy, workforce development, legal services and services for older adults.

UNH has worked closely with the City Council for years to ensure the stability of core services for New York City’s neighborhoods. We are grateful for your work and your partnership to preserve and expand critical services for New York’s communities. This year we need to work with you both to preserve critical services and to stabilize the nonprofit organizations that provide these services. For that reason, our first and most urgent request is that the City Council include in its budget response a request the that the Mayor fund an across-the-board increase of 12% for all human services contracts.

The gaps in funding and the lack of cost escalators in human services contracts have a direct impact on the services that providers can offer. Examples of the steps that nonprofits have had to take in order to address shortfalls from underfunded contracts include:

* DFTA funded Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORC) have struggled to meet requirements for three days per week of nursing services.
* Child care centers have been forced to collapse classrooms bring children from one classroom to another during pickup time so that they do not have to pay staff to be in both classrooms, depend on parent volunteers to meet ratios of adults in the classroom or eliminate art and music programs.
* Adult Literacy programs have been unable to hire full-time teachers, forcing them to instead rely on a patchwork of part-time staff, which prevents the programs from retaining experienced educators.
* After-school programs have assigned a single education director to cover programs at five or more sites.
* Providers of home-delivered meals for older adults are unable to make ends meet when they struggle to hire enough staff to deliver the required meals in their service area.

The underfunding of city contracts is forcing nonprofits to make difficult decisions about whether to apply for funding and offer services that neighborhoods need. For example, this recently had implications regarding workforce programs. HRA released three RFP’s for workforce programs under the CareerPathways banner, none of which were funded at a price point high enough to be viable for settlement houses and other organizations with well-established credibility in their community. As such, many of these organizations did not apply.

In December, UNH joined over 200 organizations in a letter to Mayor de Blasio calling for a 12% across the board increase in human services contracts. This investment is needed now more than ever. New York’s community infrastructure- its settlement houses and community based organizations- is the only thing that can ensure our City can be the sanctuary it needs to be to protect New Yorkers against policies aimed at our communities.