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**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses**

**Before the New York City Council**

**Committee on Finance**

**Honorable Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, Chair**

**At the FY 2018 Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**Presented by Gregory Brender**

**Co-Director of Policy & Advocacy**

**March 2nd, 2017**

Good afternoon Chair Ferreras-Copeland and members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance 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.

At the same time, critical services are at risk in this budget cycle. The Preliminary Budget did not include funding for many priority areas for settlement houses and without further action neighborhoods will lose services for older adults, adult literacy programs, youth employment programs, mental health services, after-school programs and child care centers. UNH urges the City to take the following actions:

*Nonprofit Human Services Sector*

* Increase all City human services contracts by 12% to address the longstanding underfunding of human services contracts and shore up human services providers.

*Older Adult Services*

* Baseline $13.5 million for core services that are either funded by the City Council or funded by the administration only in FY 2017: DFTA Core Services Enhancement ($660,000), Elder Abuse Enhancement ($335,000), Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities ($3,850,000), Senior Centers for Immigrant Populations ($1,5000,000), Senior Centers, Programs and Service Enhancement ($3,578,000), Social Adult Day Care ($950,000), 6th Congregate Weekend Meal ($600,000) and Home Care ($2,000,000).

*Early Childhood Education*

* Restore $6.9 million to preserve 16 child care centers that are funded though the City Council.

*After-School Programs*

* Baseline $20.3 million to fund summer camp for 34,000 middle school students ensuring that every SONYC After-School slot has a summer component.
* Restore $16 million to preserve 9,600 COMPASS After-School slots for elementary school students and expand COMPASS Elementary programs by at least 10,000 slots.
* Invest $8.8 million to standardize rates for COMPASS After-School slots for elementary school students at $3,200 per student.

*Youth Employment Programs*

* Support the Mayor’s proposal for baselined funding 65,000 summer jobs through the Summer Youth Employment Program in FY 2018.
* Expand Services to connect Out of School Out of Work youth to education and employment, including an investment of $3 million in Young Adult Internship Program Plus.
* Baseline and expand Work, Learn and Grow, a year-round employment program, at $53.7 million with 250 slots for Out of School Out of Work Youth.

*Mental Health Services*

* Restore $1.83 million for Geriatric Mental Health Initiative (GMHI)
* Restore $1.0002 million for Children Under 5 Mental Health Initiative (CU5)
* Restore $3.31 million for Autism Awareness Initiative

*Immigrant Services- Literacy and Legal Services*

* Restore and baseline at $12 million for adult literacy programs in order to insure immigrant have the English proficiency necessary to educate themselves and their families about their rights and opportunities.
* Fund new family literacy initiative at $5 million, which would capitalize on existing city investments in early childhood education, afterschool and adult literacy, by focusing on the success of whole families.
* Restore, expand, and baseline immigrant legal services at $20.4 million, including $13m for the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative and $7.1m for the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project.

We thank you again for the opportunity to testify and look forward to working with you on behalf of New York City’s communities.