



**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses
Before the New York State Senate
Standing Committee on New York City Education
Honorable John Liu, Chair
Hearing on Accountability and Governance in New York City Schools**

March 15, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on accountability and governance in New York City schools. UNH is the membership organization of New York's settlement houses. We mobilize our members and their communities to advocate for good public policies, and we promote strong organizations and practices that keep neighborhoods resilient and thriving for all. Our goal is to strengthen and sustain settlement houses' contribution to the economic vitality, health, and cultures of their communities and New York City.

Today, UNH's membership includes 40 settlement houses in New York City and two in upstate New York. The work we do strengthens the capacity of more than 30,000 employees and volunteers working across 680 locations to continue providing necessary services for people of multiple generations with programs that provide skills, education, social services, health, arts, and connection to community and civic engagement opportunities for over 765,000 New Yorkers who visit settlement houses each year.

Settlement houses work closely with public schools and the Department of Education to support New York City's students throughout their entire education and their lives. Settlement houses currently run:

- Early childhood education programs including year-round full day EarlyLearn programs, 3-K for All and Pre-K for All;
- After-School programs in both public schools and community based sites;
- Community School Partnerships in elementary, middle and high schools;
- Learning to Work Programs which support young people completing their degree at Transfer Schools and Young Adult Borough Centers; and
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation classes either via their own teachers, or by hosting DOE teachers in their settlement houses.

Mayoral control must include Mayoral accountability to all aspects of the public education system. New York City's public education system relies on community based organizations who educate more than 60% of the children in Pre-Kindergarten programs. Yet the contracts that the City offers to community based organizations do not allow them to pay their teachers, staff and directors salaries on par with their counterparts in public schools.

There are stark salary disparities, and they grow over time. For example, a certified head teacher in a 3 year old classroom in a community based organization has a starting salary of \$46,920, while a certified teacher at a public school starts at \$61,894. After time, these disparities grow wider. With eight years of experience, a public school teacher's annual salary will have grown to slightly over \$81,042 while a teacher in a community based program will be earning just \$48,920.

While Mayor de Blasio's commitment to early childhood education is admirable, his administration has consistently failed to address the growing salary disparity issue for early childhood educators. The Mayor has called for a unified early childhood education system, but this is simply not possible until salary disparities are addressed.

Settlement houses and other Community Based Organizations offer top-quality early childhood education programs. However, these nonprofit providers are forced to pay their teachers, staff and directors far less than they would earn doing the same job at a public school because the City is underfunding them. Nonprofit providers have played a major role in making Pre-K for All and other early childhood education initiatives a success, but these same providers struggle to recruit and retain staff due to lower pay.

The situation is only getting worse. Nonprofit providers consistently lose staff to higher paying positions with the New York City Department of Education. Some providers have been forced to close classrooms or shut down their programs entirely. Research has shown that a consistent connection between a child and an adult is essential to early childhood development. The salary disparity issue directly interrupts this relationship as teachers leave their positions, often suddenly.

This is common sense – educators with similar credentials should make the same salary regardless of whether they work at a public school or at nonprofit.

United Neighborhood Houses urges Mayor de Blasio to uphold his commitment to early childhood education and commit to funding nonprofit and DOE programs at the same levels.