

TESTIMONY

New York City Council
Committee on Contracts

Jointly with the Committee on Aging and the Committee on Youth Services
June 23, 2020

Submitted by:

X

Good morning Chair Kallos and members of the New York City Council Committee on Contracts, Chair Chin and members of the Committee on Aging, and Chair Rose and members of the Committee on Youth Services. My name is X and I represent X [summary of organization].

There has been an underfunding crisis in the human services sector long before COVID-19 came to our City. Currently, because our government contracts drastically underfund the cost of implementing mandated services, it has been very difficult to be nimble and respond to New Yorker's immediate and long-term needs during our continued pandemic response and recovery. The human services sector has the expertise, experience, cultural competency, and community trust needed to make sure that individuals get the lifesaving services they need now, as well as support for long-term personal recovery. But none of that will be possible unless the City commits to supporting the financial stability of the sector.

Due to gaps in funding under City contracts, my organization [list some examples you are comfortable sharing such as: long waitlists, having high turn-over, paying less than employees could make compared to City jobs, having vacancies that are unable to be filled, layoffs, passing health insurance costs along to staff, reducing benefits, etc.]. Cuts that were imposed in FY20, as well as proposed cuts in FY21, also have compounded these issues by [give examples of how cuts/proposed cuts have impacted your ability to respond to COVID-19 and maintain services].

The sector has been speaking about these issues long before COVID-19 and during this crisis we have asked the City to provide the necessary tools nonprofits need to affect real change. But solutions and resources have been slow to materialize.

We must act boldly and immediately to address this crisis.

[add or remove examples/action items to this list]

- Commit to paying frontline human services workers emergency pay retroactive to March 23, 2020, renew the COLA in FY21 at a cost of \$48 million, and fight for comprehensive pay parity for human services workers as part of New York's COVID-19 recovery.
- Stop the devastating youth services cuts including SYEP, Beacon, COMPASS/SONYC, Unity Works, and NYCHA-based Cornerstone programs that will leave our youth behind this summer and beyond.

- Fund the home-delivered meals program with an immediate \$26M to meet the current demand and pull the underfunded Home Delivered Meals RFP in order to work with food-based providers to design a meals delivery system that leverages the sector's expertise, infrastructure, and current needs of the community.
- Cut the NYPD's budget by at least one billion dollars in FY21 and used that money to ensure a more equitable recovery from the pandemic by investing in youth services, senior services, and other programs that support the communities of color who have been hardest hit by COVID-19 due to structural racism.
- Support providers now with continuing emergency funds to address COVID-19 immediate needs and during reopening with a plan for redesign of program space. These funds are needed to ensure important community spaces can adhere to social distancing requirements, are deep cleaned, and have necessary sanitation supplies.
- Increase funding for the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund (NSF) to \$10M and remove the current cap on personnel to allow organizations to fund staff positions for lasting capacity.
- Back FY21 contracts with robust cash advances that are sent out immediately in July, stop the recoupment of advances, and change the policy so that advances are recouped at the end of the contract – not at the end of each year.

For decades, despite small incremental changes, the City has asked human services providers to do more with less. This dangerous gamble directly resulted in a human services sector that was on the brink of failure before New York City saw its first case of COVID-19. Now our City is facing the devastating ramifications of those choices. We cannot ignore this crisis any longer.

Thank you again for providing me with this opportunity to testify, and for your partnership on all the issues impacting our community. I look forward to working with you on these pressing issues.

[Name]

[Organization]

[Contact Information]