



184 ELDRIDGE STREET  
NEW YORK NY 10002  
212-453-4555  
UNIVERSITYSETTLEMENT.ORG

# Testimony of University Settlement before the New York City Council

## Preliminary Budget Hearing

Committee on Children and Youth, Chair Althea  
Stevens

Submitted by Letty Hawthorne,  
Assistant Director of Atlantic Terminal,  
University Settlement

March 22, 2024

Chair Stevens and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Letty Hawthorne, and I'm the Assistant Program Director at Atlantic Terminal for University Settlement.

We would like to raise budget concerns that our afterschool programs are potentially facing.

We believe the DYCD should reconsider how they calculate Rate of Participation (ROP). Since COVID, the landscape for how families use after school has changed, but that does not mean there is not the same, if not more, need.

For example, parents who have the flexibility for hybrid work may only need 2-3 days of after school for their children, but we would not be able to count these students towards our ROP requirements.

As well, many students are now receiving 2-3 days of additional academic tutoring support offered by their schools during afterschool hours. These students need our afterschool programs for the other 2-3 days of week, but again, we would not be able to count them towards our ROP if we enrolled them. We don't believe that afterschool programs should be pitted against the academic supports that the schools offer.

We are excited to welcome and support asylum seekers in our programs, but the systems created by the city make it difficult for asylum seeking students to enroll in our programs.

Since their busses only run during the beginning and end of the school day, many of these students are unable to enroll in our programs because there is no transportation for them. Because of the city's 60-day shelter rule, these students are moved between schools, which is destabilizing for them. Even if they can enroll in afterschool programs, they can't stay for longer than a few months.

This inconsistency in the student population makes it difficult for afterschool programs to maintain stable enrollment, and as our funding is

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dependent on an inflexible rate of participation, we are also worried about how this will negatively impact our programs.

We believe that there are simple steps that the city can take, such as expanding the bus schedule for asylum seekers, that would benefit both the students and the community by stabilizing the programs.

We want and can support our newest young New Yorkers. We believe CBOs like University Settlement are positioned well, with multilingual and culturally diverse staff, to support students and families.

The challenges described are true for all afterschool programs, but impact our Cornerstones even more acutely, as our Cornerstones programs are outside of schools, and therefore have an additional burden when it comes to outreach to the student population.

We also reiterate the need to:

- Restore \$6.9 million to provide COMPASS afterschool services for 3,538 youth.
- Restore \$19.6 million to preserve extended hours and Friday programming for Summer Rising middle school students.
- Preserve Learning to Work (LTW) and Community Schools programming once federal stimulus funding expires.

For the COMPASS programs, there is a mismatch from the budget cuts that will require afterschool programs to cut seats and the need that we see from our families.

The Summer Rising cuts will leave our middle school participants with nowhere to go this summer and many staff without summer employment, which they count on as the cost of living continues to increase.

Finally, we continue to struggle to recruit and retain staff due to the low pay and limited hours of the part-time positions. If we don't have the staff, then we can't enroll students. We appreciate the multi-year COLA investment that the Council and the City has committed to our sector. We urge the Council to pass CM Stevens's prevailing wage legislation, which would require City agencies to include sufficient funding to cover those wages in contracts, and track implementation of those wages by human service contractors, and fully fund it in the FY25 Budget to limit impacts to programs.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [lhawthorne@universitysettlement.org](mailto:lhawthorne@universitysettlement.org).