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**MAYOR DE BLASIO, FIRST LADY MCCRAY, SCHOOLS CHANCELLOR PORTER,  
AND SPEAKER JOHNSON ANNOUNCE HISTORIC EXPANSION OF MENTAL  
HEALTH SUPPORTS FOR ALL SCHOOLS**

*An unprecedented investment in mental health staff, supports and training for students,  
teachers, and parents*

**NEW YORK**—Mayor Bill de Blasio, First Lady Chirlane McCray, Schools Chancellor Meisha Porter, and Speaker Corey Johnson today announced an historic expansion in access to school-based mental health supports for school communities as they confront and heal the trauma caused by COVID-19. As part of this expansion, mental health supports are being integrated into Summer Rising, all schools will participate in social-emotional screening, and over 600 social workers, psychologists, and family support workers will be hired totaling over 6,000 mental health workers in our schools across the city. Additionally, mental health resources and training will be made available to parents through DOE's Parent University and to early childhood educators.

“Here in New York City, we are doing everything we can to make sure our children and their families feel supported. Given the trauma of the past year, we know that starts with building out and fortifying our City’s mental health infrastructure,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “Our message to children, parents, and guardians is clear: we will heal our city together.”

“Social-emotional screenings at every public school marks a critical expansion of mental health support for our young people,” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. “These screenings are a preventive measure, with a focus on maintaining wellness. Children will have an opportunity to talk about how they are feeling, how they’re getting along with friends and family, and talk about anything big or small they may be experiencing. These are conversations they should be able to have in the best of times. But after the year we’ve had, these conversations are more important than ever as they manage the grief, anxiety and trauma triggered by the pandemic.”

“Since day one, we have prioritized access to mental health care for all students and fought to ensure our educators and families have the supports they need to confront the trauma caused by the pandemic,” said **Schools Chancellor Meisha Porter**. “This historic investment underscores our commitment to address the social-emotional needs of our children by providing wraparound supports and services to meet them where they are. Our future is brighter when our young people are thriving.”

“The past 13 months have been unimaginably difficult for our students. In addition to the already daunting normal stressors, they’ve endured intense emotional and mental trauma because of the pandemic. They need help. They need more social workers and other mental health resources to deal with these enormous challenges,” said **Speaker Corey Johnson**. “This City Council has fought to add social workers in schools in every budget, and I’m proud we are making that happen in this budget when they are needed more than ever.”

### **SUMMER RISING**

Supporting the mental health and recovery of our students is ongoing over the course of the school year. For many students attending Summer Rising, this summer may be their first time back in school buildings. Under this initiative, every Summer Rising site will be staffed with social workers who will ease the transition of returning and provide students with individualized and group counseling. They will be crucial in ensuring students are getting the support they need over the course of the summer and as they get ready for in-person learning this fall.

### **UNIVERSAL SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SCREENING**

To ensure there is a successful return and recovery this fall, our educators must have the resources and supports necessary to address the social-emotional needs of all students. To that end, a social-emotional screening tool will be made available citywide to all children from infants/toddlers through grade 12. Social-emotional screening assists educators in better understanding the development of children, identifying common signs of trauma and distress in students, and helping better plan next steps in providing care. To coincide with the screening expansion, the DOE’s successful staff training initiative will expand to reach all 30,000 early childhood staff members. This means that every early childhood staff member will have access to professional development in trauma-informed practices.

### **HIRING 500 NEW SOCIAL WORKERS**

When educators identify a young person who needs additional support, over 600 newly hired mental health professionals will be on hand to provide care. This fall, 500 new school-based social workers will be hired, inclusive of the 150 social workers announced in December. 60 borough-based social workers, 90 school psychologists and 30 family support workers will also be hired to provide direct care for students in the 270 most high need schools.

This means that every school will have at least one full-time social worker or school-based mental health clinic - in addition to other pre-existing supports like Community School programs and resources across the city, such as NYC Health + Hospitals and ThriveNYC. In total, over 6,000 social workers, guidance counselors, and school psychologists will provide support to schools this fall, in addition to community-based resources.

### **ENGAGING PARENTS**

Parents are educators’ strongest partners in ensuring the City’s young people are thriving and parents must have access to the same resources educators do. The expansion of Parent University

will include resources that help families understand if their child may need social-emotional and mental health support. In addition to school-based supports, parents will have access to a parent hotline, where counselors will be trained on the school social-emotional screener and can provide families with community-based options for care.

Families of our youngest learners will also have expanded access to a 4-week family workshop series, “Parenting Through the Pandemic.” This workshop, facilitated by the DOE’s Division of Early Childhood Education social workers, provides families with community and connection as well as support in creating routines, managing stress, and supporting family wellbeing, with a focus on neighborhoods most impacted by COVID-19. To date, 2,000 families have been trained with a goal of training at least 2,000 parents annually.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, supporting the mental health of our students was a central part of this Administration’s focus with the 2019 major investment in social-emotional learning and mental health. Additionally, since the pandemic began we launched several initiatives to address the unique trauma caused by this crisis:

- **Trauma 101:** At the height of the pandemic, the DOE trained approximately 13,000 staff throughout the spring and summer in a Trauma 101 series focused on grief and loss, bereavement and self-care in a crisis. This included Crisis Team members, who respond to schools that experience a loss and provide mental health supports, school leaders and school support staff.
- **Trauma Responsive Educational Practices (TREP):** Building on that, the DOE launched an online trauma-informed care professional learning platform, that builds adult capacity to recognize signs and symptoms of trauma, strengthen community and foster resilience, proactively support student needs, and respond appropriately when students require additional support. To date, over 75,000 DOE educators and community partners have participated in this opportunity.
- **Bridge to School:** Prior to the reopening of schools, the administration announced the “Bridge to School” initiative, a multi-pronged focus on mental health supports for students and staff this fall that trained every school leader in trauma-informed practices, like how to create classroom structures that facilitate healing, identify students in crisis, and procedures for compassionately supporting students struggling with grief and bereavement.
- **In October:** NYC Health + Hospitals began directly connecting to 26 schools in the neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID-19 to outpatient mental health clinics, where children and adolescents can receive ongoing therapy, psychiatric evaluation, medication management, and other clinical services. Additionally, the City moved to transform School Mental Health Consultants, who previously worked with schools to develop mental health plans and capacity, into providers of direct clinical mental health care in 350 schools in those neighborhoods.

- **In December:** the City expanded these supports by launching mental health screeners in the neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID-19. A social emotional screening is an evidence-based tool that facilitates a check-in on how students are doing emotionally and assesses a general sense of wellbeing, based on the observations made by the adults in school that know them best.

“With half of the mental health conditions developing by age 14, less than half of the youth with mental health conditions are receiving any kind of treatment. Undiagnosed, untreated, and inadequately treated mental illnesses significantly interfere with a student’s ability to learn, grow, and develop. Since they spend much of their productive time in educational settings, schools should provide a unique opportunity to identify and treat mental health conditions by serving students where they already are,” said **State Senator Robert Jackson**. “We welcome this unprecedented investment to give every child access to mental health care and offer much-needed support to our educators and parents.”

“The devastation caused by this pandemic is having a significant impact on youth, particularly those from historically under-resourced communities and under-funded schools”, said **State Senator Roxanne J. Persaud, Chair of the Senate Social Services Committee**. “More counselors, social workers and support programs for students and their families — this is what fiscal equity looks like. Thank you to the Mayor, Chancellor, Speaker and First Lady for advancing this critical effort.”

“The Coronavirus pandemic has taken a tremendous toll on the mental and emotional well-being of our students, and under those conditions, it is very important that we provide them with the help and support that they need to return to normalcy in school and home life,” said **State Senator James Sanders Jr.** “I support the city in its efforts to provide these much-needed resources.”

“Investing in our children's mental health is more important than ever,” said **State Senator Diane J. Savino**. “This generation of kids has gone through a pandemic, school closures, many lost loved ones due to COVID, and this historic funding will help give children the tools they deserve to process this experience.”

"This public health crisis has had a profound impact on our students' mental health and wellbeing. Between school closures, transitioning to remote learning, and social isolation, many students are struggling both academically and personally. We must prioritize our students' social and emotional wellbeing as this crisis continues, especially in the hardest hit communities which are still facing severe economic impacts,” said **State Senator Luis R. Sepúlveda**. This new program will give educators and staff new tools to support our children and address their needs as we return to in person learning. Thank you to Mayor Bill de Blasio, First Lady Chirlane McCray, Schools Chancellor Porter, and Speaker Johnson for this initiative and commitment to our students' mental health needs."

"By investing in the mental and emotional well-being of students in the Summer Rising program, we are investing in our community," said **State Assembly Member Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn**. "It is time we address mental health needs in the same way we address physical

health needs. Mental health is critical to a child's academic success and is more important now than ever, as we recover from the trauma of the COVID-19 crisis. I thank the Mayor, First Lady, Chancellor and Speaker for this program."

"After a year of crisis, trauma, and loss for countless New Yorkers, a critical component of our continued recovery is the mental health of our residents," said **State Assembly Member Kenny Burgos**. "This is especially true in the case of our students. I applaud our City leadership for this groundbreaking expansion of mental health care in our schools and the investment in the socio-emotional supports our children need for their success."

"Now more than ever we must prioritize the mental health and social emotional needs of our young people," said **State Assembly Member Nathalia Fernández**. "The expansion of these support services in our schools is a necessary step toward addressing the needs of our students. I am proud that our city is making this investment to ensure that our children will finally get the mental health care and support that they deserve."

"As a longtime mental health professional and advocate, I've been fighting for greater mental health access for New Yorkers of all ages, including children," said **State Assembly Member Mathylde Frontus, Chair of the Assembly Subcommittee on Minority Mental Health**. "I recently introduced a bill to expand mental health services in schools and continue to support measures that support these initiatives. I thank the administration for their leadership and look forward to continuing to work to ensure equitable access to critical healthcare services."

"A true recovery requires us to make meaningful and sustained investments in young New Yorkers whose social and emotional growth was interrupted by this public health crisis," said **State Assembly Member Emily Gallagher**. "The mental health support that will be available at the Summer Rising program and the hiring of more than 600 social workers, psychologists, and family support workers is exactly what we need to be doing and I commend our City leaders on this historic announcement."

"The coronavirus pandemic has increased the mental health burden that our children are experiencing each day so our call to respond is greater than ever. I'm grateful for the increased investment of mental health professionals and services in our schools," said **State Assembly Member Jessica González-Rojas**. "I proudly sponsor state legislation that would increase the number of school psychologists and social workers in each school district to more closely meet the recommended ratio by the New York State Association of School Psychologists of 1,000 students per school psychologist and 500 to 700 students per social worker. Every child deserves mental health support. This funding gets us closer to that goal."

"This past year has been difficult, and as we begin to reopen and address the impact COVID has had throughout our communities, it is important to note the long-lasting psychological and mental damage of the pandemic, especially on our youth and particularly those in underserved communities which were disproportionately affected," said **State Assembly Member Victor Pichardo**, "Therefore, I applaud Mayor Bill de Blasio and New York City Department of Education Chancellor Meisha Porter on today's initiative. It is a step in the right direction in allowing New York students the ability to heal."

"Mental health professionals and social workers are trained to address the grief, distress and trauma caused by the pandemic. They will provide our students, teachers, and school staff with much needed support for Summer Rising and our upcoming academic year," said **State Assembly Member David Weprin**.

"I am heartened by today's announcement of a historic expansion in mental health supports for students in communities across New York City. With over 600 social workers, school psychologists and family support workers working collaboratively this summer and fall to support the social and emotional needs of young people, New York City students that have been impacted by the parallel pandemics of COVID-19, racial trauma, and economic hardship will receive necessary support in the school year ahead and beyond," said **State Assembly Member Khaleel Anderson**. This is an investment to support academic learning, social-emotional growth and development, and overall health and well-being – it is and must be the priority action led by the New York City Department of Education in this moment and is a first step with tremendous amounts of work ahead."

"From day one as Council Education Chair, I vowed to implement the lessons I learned as an educator in the classroom. I learned that one of the most impactful ways to reach our students and meet their needs, especially for our most vulnerable, was adding full-time social and emotional supports in schools. That is why in 2019, working with Speaker Johnson and Mayor de Blasio, we added 200 new full-time social workers in schools and that is why we are building on that success by adding 500 additional social workers in this budget," said **Council Member Mark Treyger, Chair of the Committee on Education**. "We have more work to do, but this is a tremendous step forward for students and our school communities."

"From a global pandemic to a racial reckoning, families across our city have undergone traumatic and life-altering experiences that disproportionately affected Black and brown households. Our children are struggling to comprehend the crises that we are facing, adapting to the drastic changes, while focusing on their schoolwork. We urgently need expanded access to mental health support to meet these unprecedented challenges and remove the socio-emotional barriers that could hinder our students' ability to excel in school. The integration of social workers in every school building will be instrumental in ending the disparities in social and emotional support for our students while transforming our academic institutions into safe spaces for healing," said **Council Member Farah N. Louis, Chair of the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addictions**.

"Given what our students, parents, and teachers have endured throughout the pandemic, this historic expansion to mental health supports in our schools is needed now more than ever," said **Council Member Adrienne Adams**. "I thank Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Johnson, and Chancellor Porter for their commitment to addressing the social-emotional needs of our students. This investment will make a tremendous difference as our students fully return to their classrooms."

"The COVID-19 pandemic spared no one, especially our youth. The shift from a familiar, consistent daily routine was hard for many adults and will have a lasting impact on our students.



Ensuring we are providing wraparound and holistic services is inextricably linked to our recovery,” said **Council Member Selvena N. Brooks-Powers**.

"Mental health support is one of the most critical parts of school education that is needed today. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on the lives of all of us. But, in particular, our children and the youngest among us have been impacted by the trauma of the pandemic. Even before the pandemic there was a need for social workers in schools to mitigate issues that plague many students especially coming from disadvantaged communities. Trauma can come in all sorts but the aftermath of a pandemic here in New York City is especially traumatic. Many young people have had to see loved ones pass away, relatives get the disease, or maybe even have gotten sick themselves. The trauma that leaves on young people can be lifelong. The support Mayor de Blasio is giving schools is groundbreaking. 500 social workers in schools is an astounding number. The ability to be able to have social workers available for students to rely on and to become a part of their support system is necessary to mitigate any lasting emotional damage the heart of the pandemic may have had. As a social worker of more than 13 years I can attest to the necessity of social workers in communities and the ability social workers can have and helping people. The ability to have social workers available through the Summer Rising program, have universal social emotional screening, along with engaging parents to this new process is an important elevation of what school education should be in the city. School should be a place of support, education, and growth for young people. I applaud Mayor de Blasio on taking these crucial steps to make sure our education system becomes an even more safe space for educators and young people,” said **Council Member Darma Diaz**.

“The expansion of mental health resources is critical to the success of our school communities, especially as we help our students and teachers cope with the trauma and anxiety that have been caused by COVID-19,” said **Council Member Mathieu Eugene**. “I appreciate the advocacy of Mayor De Blasio, First Lady Chirlane McCray, Chancellor Porter, and Speaker Johnson to help our city address the mental health aspect of this public health crisis. As a medical doctor, and a longtime advocate for both expanded healthcare resources and more programs to help our young people, I am pleased that the city is making an investment in the area of school-based mental health support in our public education system.”

"It is an understatement to say that our children and families have been traumatized by the pandemic. A public health crisis completely altered our society and students had to adjust from a physical classroom to learning virtually at home. Those interpersonal relationships were removed from the classroom and the pandemic highlighted the systemic inequalities in our society that act as roadblocks to a student's academic success. Even now, we do not know the full impact of this pandemic on our students. Caregivers were laid-off from their jobs, loved ones passed away from COVID-19, the digital divide prevented students from continuing their education and the list goes on and on. It is imperative that we provide students and their families with the necessary support and wrap-around services that address their social-emotional needs while preparing them to become future leaders in our city. I want to thank the administration for this historic investment in our youth and in our mental health professionals,” said **Council Member Vanessa Gibson**.

"Mental health is vital to the wellbeing of every New Yorker, especially during this pandemic, and our schoolchildren are no exception," said **Council Member Barry S. Grodenchik**. "I have often heard from school leaders that staffing levels for social workers have been inadequate, so the addition of five hundred social workers to our schools is a long-awaited and much needed step forward."

"I commend Mayor de Blasio, First Lady McCray, Chancellor Porter, and Speaker Johnson on the expansion of mental health services that will be provided in our New York City schools," said **Council Member Alan Maisel**. "With the school's integration of trained professionals facilitating in resolving emotional and mental trauma, it will ensure that our children have easier access to services that they may need."

"The effects of COVID have been disheartening on so many families and children, especially within hard hit communities. As we work towards recovery, it is paramount that we are expanding mental health support across our schools. Students and their families had to adjust to a new normal in unprecedented ways and this expansion will ensure our communities have the support they need," said **Council Member Francisco Moya**.

"I applaud the efforts of bringing Mental Health Support to all schools," said **Council Member Fernando Cabrera**. "One in 5 children struggle, or at some point will struggle with their mental health. We must help each and everyone of them and this is how."

"Educators know our school communities will need resources to confront the toll the pandemic is taking on children and their families," said **United Federation of Teachers' President Michael Mulgrew**. "Hiring these professionals is the first step of putting together a plan to deal with the social-emotional challenges our students are facing. We are moving in the right direction."

"This is a tremendous, broad-based initiative – exactly what is needed. Our children have been more affected by the mental health impacts of the pandemic than any other age group, and bringing them back to school with emotional and mental health supports is truly the key to their long-term health and resiliency," said **Paul Gionfriddo, President and CEO of Mental Health America**.

"Social workers serve the students of the largest school district in this country every day by providing mental health services, with a caring, student-centered approach," said **Dr. Claire Green-Forde, Executive Director of National Association of Social Workers-NYC Chapter (NASW-NYC)**. "The role of schools in helping to address the mental, emotional, and social needs of our children has always been critical, but that role is more important than ever as we recover from COVID-19. We are so proud to work alongside Chancellor Porter and Deputy Chancellor Robinson to make this critical investment a reality and close service gaps that have disproportionately impacted Black, Indigenous, and People of Color."

"By making these unprecedented investments, New York City is showing the nation how to address the pandemic-driven surge in student mental health needs," said **former U.S. Rep. and founder of The Kennedy Forum, Patrick J. Kennedy**. "I applaud Mayor de Blasio, First Lady



McCray, and School Chancellor Porter for their continued leadership in recognizing that mental health is essential to student success.”

“Many children are returning to school depressed, anxious, or angry. Grieving the death of loved ones, they see their parents struggling economically, and after an uncertain school year they are struggling academically. Children learn best when they are calm and focused. I applaud Mayor DeBlasio and First Lady McCray for their vision of schools as - emotional and educational – safe havens. They are investing in our city’s future by investing in our children and families,” said **Linda Rosenberg, MSW, Columbia University, Department of Psychiatry**.

“This investment in the mental health of our students and families is much needed as we cope with the ongoing mental stress and trauma of this pandemic. As we plan for the reopening of our school system, ensuring that our schools have mental health professionals such as psychologists and social workers is critical to creating the Healing-Centered spaces that will welcome our children back to school,” said **Thomas Sheppard, CEC Presidents’ Appointee, NYC Panel for Educational Policy**. “I applaud Mayor de Blasio, First Lady McCray, Speaker Johnson, and Chancellor Porter for hearing the stories of our families like Grisel Cardona and doing what's necessary to support us. I see this expansion as a great first step, and look forward to continuing to work with City Hall, the New York City Council, and the Department of Education in ensuring that our students, families, and schools have the resources and spaces they need to succeed.”

“Investing in resources to address the social-emotional needs of youth is vital to their healing,” said **Kimberly Williams, President & CEO of Vibrant Emotional Health**. “Engaging screenings and supports at the school level and involving families, teachers and counselors will go a long way in creating the supports our students need to thrive.”

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