



**OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT**

**ANTONIO REYNOSO**

Brooklyn Borough President

Attached please find my report on proposed modifications to the Fiscal Year 2026 Preliminary Budget, per New York City Charter Chapter 10, Section 245.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Antonio Reynoso", followed by a horizontal line.

Antonio Reynoso  
Brooklyn Borough President  
March 26, 2025



## OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**ANTONIO REYNOSO**

Brooklyn Borough President

### **City Council Committee on Hospitals Hearing on the FY26 Preliminary Budget March 6, 2025**

Good afternoon Chair Narcisse and member of the committee, and thank you for holding this hearing today. My name is Tamisha Johnson and I am here representing Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso.

New York City's public hospital system continues to act as a clinical care safety net for the growing number of vulnerable people in our city, such as the unhoused, asylum seekers, and the uninsured. These facilities are also frequently the main resource for advanced healthcare in under-resourced communities, in addition to operating many primary care centers in these areas.

In FY24, H+H facilities saw more than 1.2M unique patients, 70% of whom were either uninsured or covered by Medicaid. Yet City hospitals continue to suffer from staffing deficiencies caused by their inability to attract and maintain quality personnel due to their lack of competitive salaries. They also frequently lack the resources necessary to consistently deliver high-quality care due to outdated infrastructure and limited capacity to perform complex procedures.

The Preliminary FY26 Budget proposes more than \$500 million in cuts for H+H compared to last fiscal year. While some of these cuts come from scaling back pandemic response measures, services for asylum seekers also face a significant reduction. These cuts are concerning, especially considering uncertainty about whether the flow of migrants to the city will continue and/or how well the public healthcare system can serve, without continued funding, the more than 200,000 asylum seekers who have already arrived. Additionally, New York City's Correctional Health Service (which is operated by H+H and provides healthcare for incarcerated patients) also faces an \$11.7 million funding cut, despite there being no appreciable decrease in the patient census numbers for CHS to warrant it.

Maternal health continues to be a major priority for Borough President Reynoso. He is happy to see that the proposed budget for H+H includes funding for initiatives such as the Baby Box Pilot to provide new parents with baby and postpartum supplies and other resources. However, we need to do more. New York City's last comprehensive report on pregnancy-associated mortality showed striking and persistent racial disparities in maternal deaths, with Black non-Hispanic mothers dying from pregnancy-related causes at six times the rate of their white counterparts. Following expert review, almost three-quarters of these deaths were found to be

preventable with systems-level changes in care. H+H's Maternal Medical Home program (developed to improve high-risk obstetric outcomes by providing integrated medical and social services to expectant mothers with complex care needs) and obstetric simulation training (to allow clinical providers to practice how to manage obstetric emergencies) are examples of programs that should be expanded.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today. Borough President Reynoso looks forward to working with the Council to ensure that all New Yorkers, whether they've been here all their lives or arrived yesterday, can access the care they need.



## OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**ANTONIO REYNOSO**

Brooklyn Borough President

### **City Council Committee on Criminal Justice Hearing on the FY26 Preliminary Budget March 7, 2025**

Good afternoon Chair Nurse and members of the Criminal Justice committee, and thank you for holding this hearing today. My name Hannah May-Powers and I am here on behalf of Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso to call attention to the ways in which the Mayor's budget fundamentally undermines safety and the mandate to close Rikers Island.

The Department of Correction spends more than \$556,000 per year per person currently detained on Rikers Island.<sup>1</sup> This is almost 350% more than jail systems in Los Angeles and Chicago. Yet Mayor Adams wants to cut funding to programs that keep people out of jail and continues to support ineffective approaches to criminal justice.

The Department of Correction is in desperate need of rightsizing. According to the Vera Institute, the City could save \$149.6 million without one layoff, just by eliminating uniformed vacancies.<sup>2</sup> Let's be clear – DOC has a management problem, not an issue with understaffing.<sup>3</sup> As of February 27, 2025, the ratio of uniformed correctional officers to detained persons on Rikers Island was 0.8 correctional officers to 1 detained person.<sup>4</sup> Though this ratio represents a decrease from recent years, it is still vastly higher than the national average of one correctional officer per 3.6 incarcerated people.<sup>5</sup> This is an issue with both culture and practice at the DOC, which continues to ignore abuse of its unlimited sick time system. In FY2025, DOC had a total absence rate of 11.35%. This is higher than other agencies that have unlimited sick time policies such as FDNY (7.85%) and NYPD (4.61%).<sup>6</sup>

Overall, the DOC is set to receive a 9.2% budget increase over last fiscal year. This comes as agencies that seek to address the root causes of incarceration, such as housing instability and homelessness, unaddressed health and mental health concerns, and social isolation, are facing cuts. This includes the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (-3.2%), Housing Preservation

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<sup>1</sup> [Vera Institute](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Vera Institute](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Gothamist](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Corrections1](#)

<sup>5</sup> [US Department of Justice](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Mayor's Management Report](#)

and Development (-6.2%), Department of Homeless Services (-8.1%), and the Department of Youth and Community Development (-11.5%).

As of March 2, 2025, there were 6,866 New Yorkers detained on Rikers Island.<sup>7</sup> Not only is this a 10% increase from last year's jail population, but it is also drastically higher than the 4,160-person population needed to transition the population to borough-based jails when construction is completed.<sup>8</sup> However, Mayor Adams is again attempting to cut some of the most critical programs for keeping New Yorkers out of jail. Unless the funding is restored, Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) programs are slated to lose \$14.487 million. ATI programs are mandated by judges to provide participants with supportive services in their communities instead of a jail or prison sentence.<sup>9</sup> These programs provide significant supports to participants in the areas of employment, housing, education, health and mental health, and community life adjustment.<sup>10</sup> Not only do ATI programs connect people with services that more appropriately address the root causes of incarceration than detention, but they are also critical for safely lowering the detained population in order for the borough-based jail system to succeed.

According to Correctional Health Services, 25% of women at Rikers reported being homelessness upon intake.<sup>11</sup> The Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice found that 5.2% of all individuals on Rikers are street homeless.<sup>12</sup> Data on other forms of homelessness and housing insecurity such as doubling-up and transitional housing is unclear; however, we know that homeless and housing-insecure individuals are drastically overrepresented in our carceral system. Stable housing is one of the most impactful ways to address incarceration.<sup>13</sup> In 2019, the City expanded the Justice Involved Supportive Housing (JISH) program from 120 to 500 units. JISH is the only designated supportive housing program for people exiting Rikers, offering intensive support programs that are critical for people leaving jail. Since its expansion, it has largely remained stagnant due to a lack of provider funding.<sup>14</sup> The FY26 budget must include expanded funding for JISH.

Another agency facing cuts is the Board of Correction, a critical oversight body that helps to keep people detained on Rikers Island safe. The proposed budget would lead to a 5% decrease, or \$210,000, in funds for this body. Already, the number of BOC officials is not proportionate to DOC's headcount. Increasing the BOC's headcount to 1% of the DOC's would bring more eyes to the thousands of complaints filed by incarcerated people that the BOC must review every year.

Thank you again for holding this hearing. The City can and must do better for the thousands of individuals impacted by incarceration. We know that social determinants of health such as safe and dignified housing, stable employment, food security, quality education, and access to quality healthcare are all protective factors against incarceration. As a city, we must invest in resources that get to the root causes of incarceration and inequality.

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<sup>7</sup> [Data Collaborative for Justice](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Gothamist](#)

<sup>9</sup> [MOCJ](#)

<sup>10</sup> [NY State Division of Criminal Justice Services](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Correctional Health Services](#)

<sup>12</sup> [City Limits](#)

<sup>13</sup> [The Fortune Society](#)

<sup>14</sup> [CSH](#)



## OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**ANTONIO REYNOSO**

Brooklyn Borough President

### **City Council Committee on Education Hearing on the FY26 Preliminary Budget March 13, 2025**

Good morning, Chair Joseph and members of the committee, and thank you for holding this hearing today. I am here on behalf of Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso to advocate for vital programs across Brooklyn and New York City public schools. With looming federal cuts threatening essential services such as childcare funding<sup>1</sup>, it is crucial that the City aggressively invests to maintain these services for our most vulnerable communities. Unfortunately, the Adams administration has proposed cuts to several key areas.

For FY26, we recommend increased funding for Fair Student Funding, early childhood education, and critical programs such as community schools, restorative justice, and arts education. We also urge the reversal of cuts to 3K and Special Education PreK seats, alongside ensuring adequate mental health services for students. Additionally, we call for expanded school construction to address overcrowding, meet class size requirements, and improve overall learning conditions.

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION:** Providing free early childcare is critical for NYC families, given our city's growing affordability crisis. In January, the NYC Comptroller's Office noted that the average costs for family-based care have increased by 79% since 2019, now at \$18,200 per year. Center-based care has also increased by 43%, now at a staggering \$26,000 a year.<sup>2</sup> These increases underscore that access to free and low-cost childcare can make the difference between a family staying in NYC or being forced to leave.

Despite this, the Adams administration continues to propose cuts. The FY26 Preliminary Budget reflects a cut of \$112M to 3K seats, as well as \$25M to extended day/extended year seats. As we've all heard from parents, this is the wrong direction. Additionally, it is deeply concerning to see a cut of \$55M proposed to Special Education PreK seats in light of DOE's ongoing failure to close the gap in 280 legally mandated seats, reported late January 2025.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Brooklyn's trusted childcare providers are fighting for their survival after continued lapses in payments, non-renewals of their leases<sup>4</sup>, and lack of flexible contracts resulting in vacant or underenrolled

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<sup>1</sup> [Link](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Link](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Link](#)

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programs. Our providers are also at a disadvantage given that existing contracts prioritize funding per-pupil vs. school-based programs that are funded by class, generating inequitable pay.

Especially at a time where federal funding cuts threaten Head Start and other programs, we should be stepping up for our families, ensuring that childcare facilities remain open and that our City budget reflects our commitment that every child can have a quality start to their education.

**SCHOOL CLIMATE & CULTURE:** School-based support programs are critical for our youth, and it is disappointing that we must fight for them seemingly every year. Borough President Reynoso stands with the Council in its calls to secure and baseline sustainable funding for the initiatives outlined below:

- **Community Schools.** Community Schools play a critical role in supporting 21st-Century learning. The over 100 community schools in Brooklyn transform communities and provide vital wraparound services to children and their families. The administration thankfully included funding in the FY25 budget for 113 community schools that faced expiring stimulus funding. However, this funding was only for one year, and must be restored again. The Borough President calls for \$14M to be baselined for Community Schools.
- **Restorative Justice Programs.** While DOE has seen an uptick in hate crimes and bullying, this administration is proposing cuts to initiatives that center empathy, healing, and accountability. Punitive measures alone have never made our schools safer. Yet this administration is leaving a \$12M funding gap for restorative justice programs in underserved communities throughout the city.
- **Arts Education.** The Borough President urges this administration to prioritize arts education, which is currently only 3% of DOE's budget.<sup>5</sup> During last year's Preliminary Budget hearing, DOE revealed that 307 schools are operating without certified art teachers. Although \$41M was allocated in FY25, with \$25M earmarked for direct funding and the remainder for restoring prior cuts, this is again at risk of being cut for FY26. Despite these setbacks, our dedicated arts educators and institutions continue to innovate, transforming students' lives by using art to build community, heal trauma, and much more. Prioritizing arts funding is essential for developing competent, well-adjusted young people and supporting the over 700 cultural organizations partnering with schools to close gaps.
- **Youth Mental Health.** Despite Mayor Adams' announcement of \$650M in new mental health initiatives, including 100 additional Safe Haven beds for runaway homeless youth<sup>6</sup>, the DOE's Preliminary Budget cuts approximately \$889.5K from its mental health continuum work. This reduction undermines the holistic approach needed to adequately staff and support services across three agencies. We cannot expect to transform young lives without quality mental health programming. The administration must invest more in DOE's youth mental health services and School-Based Mental Health Clinics to ensure comprehensive support for students in need.

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<sup>5</sup> [Link](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Link](#)

**CLASS SIZE.** The administration has underfunded and overlooked compliance with the State's class size mandate. For FY26, the Borough President urges the DOE and SCA to prioritize a comprehensive, system-wide approach for compliance. In FY25, the DOE allocated \$296 million—67% more than the previous year—including \$79.4 million for Brooklyn schools to implement strategies like teacher programming and virtual learning.<sup>7</sup> Despite these efforts, a fragmented, short-term approach remains, exacerbated by the lack of mention of class size reduction in the Rockefeller report's recommendations<sup>8</sup> and the SCA's withholding of critical data including information on 3K seat projections, housing projections, school rezonings, co-locations, and more.<sup>9</sup>

These gaps necessitate a multi-year plan, including the hiring of 12,000 teachers, expanded school construction, and equitable resource allocation to address overcrowded schools. The proposed \$10M cut to teacher recruitment funding undermines efforts to close the teacher gap. With billion-dollar need projections according to SCA and DOE officials, we must thoughtfully approach building new spaces and implementing the recommendations of the Class Size Working Group.

#### **SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY.**

**School Construction Authority.** With great need citywide, Borough President Reynoso calls for increased funding for SCA on several capital-related initiatives to improve the space and quality of our schools. Initiatives including the following.

- **Class Size Law Compliance.** The Borough President commends that the School Construction Authority's (SCA) preliminary 2025-2029 Capital Plan allocates \$6.13B for class size reduction. However, this investment is significantly less than the reported \$25B to \$27B that would be needed to fund 85,000 new seats.<sup>10</sup> The Borough President also highlights the importance of addressing overcrowding in districts such as Districts 15 and 20, where approximately 27 and 40 schools are over-utilized, respectively.<sup>11</sup>
- **Air Conditioning for All.** In addition, the Borough President continues to fight for SCA's current designation of "instructional spaces" to be expanded to include essential learning areas like libraries, gyms, and dance rooms; revisiting this designation could enhance learning environments. The City must allocate additional capital funding for air conditioning retrofits.
- **Project Scoping.** As Reso A projects increase in cost annually and vary in size and scope, SCA has noted that NYC Comptroller Directive 10, which disallows any capital work to begin without complete funding in place, limits elected officials' ability to contribute funding. SCA should follow its own commitment to securing additional funding and/or establishing a dedicated fund for project scoping and assessments to streamline the process, allow for more accurate capital awards, and reduce the time it takes to begin capital projects.

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Thank you again for holding this hearing today. Borough President Reynoso looks forward to continuing work with the Council to provide quality educational spaces and programming for Brooklyn's students.



## OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**ANTONIO REYNOSO**

Brooklyn Borough President

### **NYC Council Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Hearing on the FY26 Preliminary Budget March 19, 2025**

Thank you Chair Brooks-Powers for holding this hearing today. I am here representing Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso, whose transportation priorities focus on improving public transit—especially in areas where access is lacking—and making walking and biking safer and more accessible.

This year, New York City became the first in the nation to implement congestion pricing, demonstrating that we are still capable of bold, transformative policy changes. However, despite this progress, cars killed more people than guns in NYC in 2024. When my office testified before this committee last year, I stressed the urgent need to fully fund the NYC Streets Plan. This tragic statistic underscores the continued need for street safety improvements, and I applaud the City Council for proposing baselined funding for daylighting intersections.

Meanwhile, other aspects of the NYC Streets Plan remain far behind schedule. In 2024, the plan set a goal of 30 miles of new protected bus lanes, yet only 13.5 miles were completed. The target for 50 new miles of protected bike lanes fell short as well, with just 29 miles delivered. The NYC Streets Plan also commits to expansion of the Open Streets program and creation of vibrant public spaces that both enhance the public realm and contribute to street safety. In the recent Streets Plan update, DOT cites pushback from local elected officials and community members as a general barrier to progress. In other words, the department is prioritizing local support for parking over life-saving street improvements that would improve safety and speed up travel for thousands of New Yorkers. Over the next fiscal year, DOT must stand firm against opposition to street safety measures, and the City Council must ensure the City meets the benchmarks of the NYC Streets Plan and continues to support the partner organizations that help manage the Open Streets and other public space programs.

Additionally, as DOT moves forward with capital projects, school safety improvements in Brooklyn must remain a priority to protect students. I also urge DOT to integrate curb bump-outs and raised crosswalks into routine road maintenance to accelerate these critical safety upgrades. Timing matters. Lives are at stake.

Beyond street safety, I am committed to closing gaps in access to opportunity. Expanding funding for priority bus projects is a direct way to do that. Research from the Pratt Center and

the Riders Alliance shows that 91% of the surveyed riders on Flatbush Avenue buses have experienced delays, and one in three has been fired, reprimanded, or lost wages as a result. Moreover, Flatbush Avenue buses primarily serve Black, female, and low-income riders.

This mayoral administration identified Flatbush Avenue as a priority for bus improvements in 2022. However, only a portion of Flatbush Avenue has seen investment, and that was in the wealthier and whiter segments north of Grand Army Plaza. In addition, Utica Avenue, which runs Brooklyn's busiest bus routes carrying almost 44,000 daily riders, was identified as needing improvements. Prioritizing and increasing funding for these bus projects will directly improve transit reliability and economic opportunities for the mostly low-income communities of color who depend on them.

Finally, I urge the City Council to take a bold approach to expanding freight capacity at the Brooklyn Marine Terminal (BMT). We already know that shifting freight from trucks to water and rail is critical. This need has been emphasized repeatedly—by EDC and DOT in Delivering Green and Blue Highways, by EDC in Freight NYC, by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council in its Regional Transportation Plan, and by DOT in Delivering New York. Now that NYC has jurisdiction over BMT, EDC has the opportunity to act on these long-standing recommendations. We must maximize freight capacity at this critical infrastructure hub and protect the footprint of the Red Hook Container Terminal to support a more sustainable, efficient freight network.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I look forward to working with the Council on this effort. Together, we can transform our city's streets and make life in this city easier and safer.



## OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**ANTONIO REYNOSO**

Brooklyn Borough President

### **City Council Committee on Governmental Operations Hearing on the FY26 Preliminary Budget March 21, 2025**

Good morning Chair Restler and Thank you for holding this hearing today. I am representing Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso to once again note that despite this committee having oversight over the city's 59 community boards, their budgets are not part of today's agenda. Community boards are a critical link between the public and City government, weighing in on important issues that impact everything from small businesses to street safety to the availability of affordable housing, and their individual budgets, as well as the support they receive from external partners, deserves the Council's attention.

The Charter mandates community boards with 22 responsibilities, including holding public hearings on issues facing their districts, creating their annual Statements of District needs and Budget Priorities, weighing in on local land use proposals, working with City agencies to communicate information to residents and evaluate service delivery, and much more. Yet due to chronic underfunding, community boards struggle to carry out these mandates, let alone day-to-day work. Most community boards have very small staffs, with little money left over to hire other assistance, such as professional planners or communications support.

Additionally, Charter's framework for external support for community boards is confusing and scattered, calling on the Borough Presidents' offices, the Civic Engagement Commission, and other agencies to provide various (and sometimes overlapping) support. However, none of these entities receive enough funding to do so adequately, and none of them have supporting community boards as their primary mandate. An example of the difficulties this can cause for day-to-day operations is regarding IT support - the Charter mandates the Office of Technology and Information (OTI) to assist boards with some technological needs because OTI only has one staff person who supports all 59 boards, it can take the agency three or more months to create an email address, three years to remove one, and weeks to address email access issues.

The following recommendations build on the work of the Future of Community Boards Working Group and incorporate the experiences of Brooklyn District Managers and the Brooklyn Borough President's Office:

**Recommendation 1: Adequately Fund Community Board Staffing:**

Increase community boards' budgets to allow for the payment of competitive salaries within existing City employee pay ranges, as well as necessary OTPS for day-to-day operations. This would support hiring an experienced District Manager and at least three full-time, professional support staff, as well as OTPS for upgraded technology, livestreaming meetings, office supplies, etc. We have proposed a change to the Charter that would base this budget on a percentage of the budget for Borough Presidents' offices; the funding for each community board district office should be the total expense funding amount for all five Borough Presidents' offices as outlined in Charter Section 82 Subsection 18, divided by 59. For example, based on the FY2020 numbers in the Charter, the budget that year for each community board office would have been \$498,087, a significant increase over current funding levels. The City could commit to this funding increase without a Charter mandate.

**Recommendation 2: Create a Central Office to Support the City's 59 Community Boards:**

We have also been advocating for Charter change to streamline the responsibility to provide external support for community board operations into one entity, the Community Board Central Office (CBCO). Should this proposal move forward, it will require a budget allocation. Based on the model of the Independent Budget Office (created through the 1989 Charter Revision Commission), the CBCO would be an independent agency funded consistently at a percentage of the City's total budget. This would protect the CBCO from vulnerability to budget cuts by the Mayor or City Council, insulate it from political volatility as Mayoral and Borough President administrations change, and ensure that the CBCO can hire and maintain the qualified staff needed to meet its mandate. Inspired by the City Council's Central Staff, the CBCO's professional staff would provide expert support to community board staff in the areas outlined below.

Overseeing the CBCO would be a rotating committee of five District Managers, representing each of the five boroughs. These representatives would be elected every two years by all the District Managers and have a term limit of four two-year terms. This committee would hire and conduct regular performance reviews for a CBCO Director, who would be in charge of everyday operations of the Office.

The City should create and fund the CBCO to provide the following support to community boards:

1. **Planning Expertise:** Provide professional technical assistance in land use planning to inform the boards' role in the ULURP process.
2. **Communications and Technology:**
  - Hold and livestream hybrid meetings (as required by State law).
  - Assist with office IT needs, such as installing hardware, creating specifications for new equipment and software pertinent to community boards' needs, creating and removing email addresses, and fixing internet access issues.
  - Produce website and social media content.
  - Create flyers and mailers in multiple languages and provide translation and interpretation at meetings as needed; and
  - Assist Borough Presidents' offices with informing the public about the opportunity to participate with community boards and apply for membership.
3. **Space needs:**

- Assist with identifying public meeting space that meets accessibility requirements.
  - Conduct regular Physical Needs Assessments of community board offices and liaise with the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) on necessary repairs and upgrades; and
  - Work with DCAS to locate permanent, accessible office space as needed and support lease negotiations.
4. **Human Resources and EEO:**
    - Provide guidance on hiring and firing staff.
    - Approve job postings and post on the City's hiring website; and
    - Provide trainings for both staff and board members that are available to all City employees, including discrimination, harassment, and reasonable accommodation.
  5. **Procurement:** Provide support for purchasing, paying bills, and signing off on vendor payments.
  6. **Intergovernmental Support:**
    - Ensure meaningful engagement from City agencies on budget consultations and other district issues; and
    - Regularly convene community board staff and provide digital tools for information sharing and communication between the boards.
  7. **Legal Support:**
    - Handle any FOIL requests that the board receives.
    - Provide guidance on updating and enforcement of bylaws; and
    - Provide other legal support as the CBCO deems necessary.
  8. **Training:** Provide training for board members on:
    - Land use and housing
    - Parliamentary procedure/Roberts Rules of Order
    - Conflicts of Interest
    - City budget and legislative processes; and
    - Other trainings as the CBCO deems necessary.

Thank you again for holding this hearing today. We look forward to working with you to develop, codify, and fund these proposals.



## OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**ANTONIO REYNOSO**

Brooklyn Borough President

### **Committees on Health and Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction Hearing on the FY26 Preliminary Budget March 24, 2025**

Good morning and thank you to Chairs Schulman and Chair Lee for holding this hearing today. I am here representing Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso to discuss the importance of investing in health and mental health resources and services to create a more equitable and healthier city.

The Preliminary FY26 Budget includes \$2.13 billion in funding for the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, of which around \$1.14 billion is from City funds. This investment is a marked decrease of over \$457 million in total funds and \$35 million in City funding from the FY25 adopted budget. Some of the largest cuts are in federally funded HHS grant programs; among the most devastating were to immunization programs. This comes at a time when vaccine-preventable diseases are on the rise nationwide, and NYC as a major hub of travel and communal activity is particularly susceptible to spreading these contagions. Large cutbacks are also seen in funding for STI programs, though the rates of reported STI's in NYC continue to be alarmingly high. In acknowledgement of what will likely be additional federal divestment in public health, the City must proactively find ways to support ongoing programs in these areas.

The Preliminary Budget falls short in other critical ways. It includes no funding for the Mental Health Continuum program, a partnership between H+H, DOE and DOHMH to provide mental health and wellness services in schools and communities. It also provides no funding for Access Health NYC, the citywide initiative that supports community-based organizations in their efforts to assist New Yorkers in obtaining health care and health insurance. The City also continues to face unacceptable racial and ethnic disparities in maternal health outcomes, yet the Preliminary Budget does little to acknowledge this reality by supporting either hospital-based or community health initiatives focused on maternal well-being.

According to a 2024 report from the State Comptroller, 21.1% of adults in New York have a mental illness and 5.1% have a serious mental illness. Between 2012 and 2022, the number of people served by the State's public mental health system increased by 23%. Despite the increased need, many New Yorkers, particularly those who are lower income or in need of more intensive services, are unable to access mental health resources. Like other health issues, the City must invest in evidence-based, lifesaving solutions to truly address mental health concerns.

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) provides community-based and 24/7 services for individuals with severe mental health needs. The goal of ACT is to provide individuals with mental health concerns with high-quality care outside of the context of a hospital setting and empower them to lead the lives they want to. Services associated with ACT include psychiatric treatment, medication monitoring, counseling, support, employment assistance, and housing support. Though ACT is a nationally recognized, evidence-based model, the program needs additional funding. Unfortunately, as of 2022, there were over 1,000 New Yorkers on a waitlist for the lifesaving services provided through ACT. Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) is similar to ACT but is tailored to the needs of individuals impacted by the criminal legal system. We know that incarcerated individuals have higher rates of mental health concerns than the general population, indicating a need for additional mental health investments, such as FACT. Baseline funding for additional FACT and ACT is necessary to combat the long waitlists for these services.

Low and middle-income New Yorkers also need additional resources for mental health concerns that are not hospital based. Respite centers help to fill this gap. Respite Centers are supportive environments that allow individuals experiencing mental health concerns to access a variety of services. Services provided in respite centers include peer support, self-advocacy education, psychoeducation, self-help training, social support groups, recreational activities, and connections to medical and psychiatric services. Despite the value of respite centers and the high level of need for their services, there are currently less than 80 beds for adults in New York City. This is an egregious deficit; however, it is not insurmountable. As a city, we must allocate funding for four new respite centers in order to comply with Local Law 118 and allocated funding for out year projected costs.

Direct forms of mental health treatment are invaluable for addressing mental health concerns. However, we know that social determinants of health impact a person's mental health and ability to consistently access treatment. In November 2015, then-Mayor de Blasio announced the City's commitment to development 15,000 units of supportive housing in the next 15 years, an initiative known as 15/15. According to a report from 2024, the City has only created 3,853 units of supportive housing nearly a decade into the 15/15 initiative. This is significantly behind where we should be as a City. For this reason, baseline funding is necessary in FY26 to ensure that supportive housing is prioritized in the coming years.

The City must also do more to address substance use concerns. Overall, there is a deficit in treatment options for individuals with dual-diagnoses, or co-occurring disorders. Many providers and treatment centers feel ill equipped to treat patients that have mental health concerns in conjunction with substance use issues. Harm reduction practices save lives by empowering individuals to make more informed decisions and by mitigating risk factors associated with substance use. Harm reduction practices are incredibly important to build out, especially considering that a fatal drug overdose occurs every three hours in New York City. In 2023, 3046 New Yorkers died due to drug overdose. To help combat this epidemic, the City must support baseline funding for expanded mobile syringe programs in addition to opioid settlement dollar allocations.



To be specific, Borough President Reynoso has endorsed the Progressive Caucus' Crisis to Care campaign, which calls for:

- \$22 million in baselined funds for Intensive Mobile Treatment teams;
- \$7 million for additional FACT teams;
- \$6.3 million for the Mayor's Office to end Domestic and Gender-based Violence;
- \$4.8 million for Justice-Involved Supportive Housing (JISH);
- \$6 million for four new respite centers;
- \$9 million in baselined funding for expanded mobile syringe services programs;
- \$4.5 million in baselined funds for 60 Peer Specialists for mental health and crisis response; and
- \$1 million to pilot and EMS Wellness and Peer Support Program.

Thank you again to Chair Schulman, Chair Lee, and members of the Health and Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction Committees for holding this hearing today. Health, including mental health, is central to our ability to thrive. The City must invest and support measures that improve health and address existing health inequities.



## OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**ANTONIO REYNOSO**

Brooklyn Borough President

### **Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Hearing on the FY26 Preliminary Budget March 25, 2025**

Good morning Chair Abreu and thank you for holding this hearing today. I am here representing Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso. As former Chair of the Council's Sanitation Committee, Borough President Reynoso remains deeply invested in a comprehensive approach to waste management that centers sustainability and environmental justice and engages all New Yorkers in doing their part. To that end, we want to address a few issues with the FY26 Preliminary Budget:

**Commercial Waste Zones (CWZ):** The long-delayed CWZ program is finally up and running after completion of the first pilot Zone in Central Queens, which by many accounts has been successful in streamlining operations and encouraging safer industry practices through increased enforcement. However, the program's true success – when it will lead to meaningful changes in vehicle miles traveled, safer streets, and industry best practices – hinges upon implementation of all 20 Zones citywide. This will require increased headcount for operations and enforcement. It will also require increased funding for outreach and education, which will ideally mean partnerships with trusted community-based organizations that can help DSNY reach local businesses more effectively. Yet the preliminary budgets for civilian headcount and enforcement by borough remain stagnant from the FY25 adopted budget, while the public information budget receives only a modest increase. Borough President Reynoso encourages the Council and the administration to work together to ensure that the program, which is a revenue generator for the City, is fully funded to for a full rollout in the upcoming fiscal year.

**Containerization:** Borough President Reynoso has testified before this committee before about his concerns with the rollout of citywide containerization. While he fully supports a citywide containerization regime, the current strategy is expensive and impractical. As predicted, taking a one-size-fits-all approach has led to bins becoming permanent fixtures on the sidewalk in areas where homeowners and businesses have nowhere to store them, and these bins are easily stolen or moved. Borough President Reynoso calls on the Mayor and the City Council to fast-track and fund stationary, shared, on-street containers, which the *Future of Trash* report called, “the only path to high-density residential containerization at scale.” These shared bins should also include space for separated recycling and organics. The Mayor's Management report notes that our recycling diversion rate continues to drop well below the City's goals. Having different strategies for different types of trash will only continue to hinder us from meeting our zero waste goals.

**Community Composting:** Borough President Reynoso thanks the Council for reinstating funding for community composting, the benefits of which go well beyond simple waste diversion and include job creation and education. He supports the Save Our Compost Coalition's ask for \$11.8 million for FY26, including a one-time allocation of \$2.19 million for the Lower East Side Ecology Center to build its facility in Canarsie, which was previously delayed due to budget cuts. This facility will not only contribute to the City's efforts to process compost locally, it will engage residents in an underserved community in composting, farming, and gardening and provide job training programs.

**Solid Waste Management Plan:** Because DSNY has brought creation of the next Solid Waste Management Plan in-house rather than paying a contractor, it is unclear how much of its budget is supporting this critical work. This important plan will guide solid waste management in New York City into the future. The 2006 plan included transformative measures, such as creating a metal/glass/plastic recycling facility in the city (now operating in Sunset Park) and developing the City-operated Marine Transfer Stations (MTSs), which ship residential waste out by barge rather than long-haul truck, a major win for environmental justice advocates who participated in shaping the plan. Though the updated plan is due in 2026, DSNY has not started any public engagement on its creation, which is deeply concerning. The Mayor and the Council should work together to ensure that DSNY is sufficiently funded to make this plan robust and transformational.

**Brooklyn District 13 and 15 Garages:** Finally, on DSNY's capital plan, Borough President Reynoso wants to once again express disappointment that Brooklyn's District 13 and 15 garages are not being considered for capital upgrades. These garages are still operating from among the worst physical plants in DSNY's inventory, with BK 13 located in a dilapidated building and parking its trucks on an HPD-owned site slated for affordable housing development, and BK 15 using trailers in an area plagued by flooding. City Council approved site selection for a new garage to be located on Coney Island Creek in 2006, but the project was never funded. These garages need and deserve a new, long-term home.

Thank you again for holding this hearing today. Borough President Reynoso looks forward to working with the Council and the administration to further our goals to make our city cleaner and more sustainable.



## OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**ANTONIO REYNOSO**

Brooklyn Borough President

### **City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings Hearing on the FY26 Preliminary Budget March 25, 2025**

Good morning Chair Sanchez and thank you for holding this hearing today. I am representing Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso, who continues to work with this Council on multiple efforts to combat our housing crisis.

The Borough President wants to commend the City Council for your advocacy on housing. Thanks to last year's Homes Now, Homes for Generations campaign, and the City for All commitments that accompanied the passage of City of Yes for Housing Opportunity, your investment in housing capital has achieved record numbers. Given the severity of our housing crisis (as the BP often mentions, the Regional Plan Association estimates that our region needs 500,000 more housing units just to meet current demand), we always need more investment in affordable housing development.

However today, we want to focus on preservation, specifically protection of small homeowners. We hear a lot about rent burden, but not as much about the approximately 40% of NYC homeowners with mortgages and 25% of homeowners without mortgages who are considered cost-burdened (paying more than 30% of their income toward housing costs) according to analysis from Comptroller Lander.

It is no surprise then that there are over 26,000 properties with municipal debt on the 60-day tax lien sale list released this month, or that we continue to see an uptick in scams targeting homeowners with debt and older homeowners, especially in communities of color. Scammers use fraudulent refinancing offers, equity stripping, and foreclosure bailout loans to take over properties, resulting in the displacement of our neighbors and the loss of generational wealth.

This is why New York City needs a true Tangled Title Fund to assist homeowners whose ownership is unclear or disputed, either because the previous homeowner died without a will or because the property has already been a target of deed theft. The City of Philadelphia has such a program, funded through its Division of Housing and Community Development. In their program, an independent Advisory Committee oversees the fund, which is administered through a non-profit called Philadelphia VIP. The fund provides up to \$4,000 each for qualified homeowners to cover administrative, legal, and other costs that may arise in resolving a homeownership issue. Homeowners are eligible if they make less than 80% of Area Median Income and have less than

\$10,000 in assets, meaning they would be unable to afford these costs on their own and would be much more likely to lose their home.

BP Reynoso commends the City Council for starting to think about what this would look like through its FY2025 Estate Planning Initiative. However, the required funding to make this work at scale is much more than provided so far, so he encourages the Council to increase that allocation this year, and to increase funding for community lawyers generally. In addition to the Tangled Title Fund work, local legal services organizations provide educational outreach, workshops, and other essential legal support, making them a critical line of defense against scammers.

Thank you again for holding this hearing today and for your ongoing partnership on efforts to help our constituents stay in their homes now and for generations.