



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

ANTONIO REYNOSO

Brooklyn Borough President

Attached please find my report on proposed modifications to the Fiscal Year 2025 Preliminary Budget, per New York City Charter Chapter 10, Section 245.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Antonio Reynoso".

Antonio Reynoso

Brooklyn Borough President

March 23, 2024



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

ANTONIO REYNOSO

Brooklyn Borough President

City Council Committee on Children and Youth Hearing on the FY25 Preliminary Budget 3.22.24

Good morning Chair Stevens and members of the Committee on Children and Youth and thank you for holding this hearing today. I am here today to represent Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso and to thank you on his behalf for your continued support of the essential programs our children, families, and most marginalized groups across the city need to thrive.

With unpredictable cuts and large budget gaps across agencies due to expiring COVID Relief funds, FY25's Preliminary Budget sends a concerning message to New Yorkers. The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) was hit with November PEGs, including reductions to: 3,538 highly coveted and necessary COMPASS slots, legal services, recreational events, youth services coordination, and even Summer Rising's Friday programming for middle schoolers – all of which are counterproductive to this administration's work to reduce crime and provide opportunities for our youth. Overall, this administration's approach to addressing a self-imposed budget crisis is inconsistent with the Council's and IBO's forecasted \$3.3 billion surplus for FY25.

Borough President Reynoso is particularly concerned about cuts to the following initiatives:

Summer Rising

Summer Rising has become a popular program that provides fun and enriching experiences for our youth, keeping them safe and off the streets in the summer. While Borough President Reynoso was pleased to see the administration restore cuts to DOE's share of the program, a \$19.6M gap still exists for DYCD's share for FY25 and outyears. The cuts impact Friday programming, which will force middle school students and their families to pay out-of-pocket for other opportunities, or worse, leave students without the opportunity for productive activities. Given the documented benefits of programs like this, we shouldn't have to fight for them every year. Borough President Reynoso encourages the administration to baseline funding for Summer Rising so that every student who wants to participate has the opportunity.

Additionally, the administration should address the ongoing issues between the providers and the administrating agencies. As you, Chair Stevens, have highlighted several times, Summer Rising providers do not feel that they are equal partners in this collaboration. This echoes the Borough President's testimony last year, as well as concerns that providers continue to share with our office. They report that poor communication from DOE has resulted in confusion from parents about enrollment, sometimes leaving parents scrambling to find childcare, and that some matches between providers and schools have ignored existing relationships. An August 2023 Chalkbeat [article](#) also reported a wide variation in

program quality. The answer to these issues is not more cuts; rather, it is giving providers more support in developing programs that are both educational and fun.

After- and Out-of-School Opportunities

It is also unfortunate to see cuts to after- and out-of-school opportunities that provide enrichment and promote pathways to employment for thousands of NYC youth, and disappointing that we have to fight for these programs seemingly every year. The Borough President stands with the Council in their calls to restore and baseline sustainable funding for the initiatives outlined below:

- **COMPASS:** The COMPASS program provides students in elementary through high school with access to after-school programs including a variety of activities. As mentioned, such programs provide critical opportunities for our youth to spend time productively, and for working parents to save on the cost of childcare. Yet the administration proposes reducing COMPASS seats by 3,538 slots annually in 2025-2027, on top of cuts already made in the November PEG. They cite underutilization as the reason for these cuts; however, providers [report](#) sustaining cuts even though they have waitlists for their existing seats.
- **Precision Employment Program.** The Precision Employment Initiative, connecting at-risk youth with green job opportunities, has served over 1,700 students since 2021 and was expanded in FY23 with an [investment from this administration of \\$54M](#). The Mayor, Speaker, Borough President Reynoso, and several other State and City electeds applauded this commitment and its targeted impact on communities such as Brownsville, East New York, Flatbush and East Flatbush.
- **Summer Youth Employment Program Metrocards:** The City Council successfully fought for free Metrocards for SYEP participants; however, this administration aims to undermine this effort with a failure to fund the full need in FY25.
- **Work-based Learning Internships:** Funding of \$714K should be baselined for this City Council initiative, which provides youth with opportunities in a wide array of industries, including pathways to high-paying and quality careers.

Youth Homelessness

According to the Mayors Management Report, DYCD's Runaway and Homelessness Crisis Centers served 780 people in the first four months of FY23, an increase of 5% compared to the previous year. Additionally, their Drop-In Centers served 1,720 youth and young adults in the first four months of FY24, an increase of 19% from the same period in FY23. These increases represent a real need for these services, yet the administration is proposing 1.96M in cuts. These services are particularly critical for [LGBTQ youth](#) and other marginalized populations. It is difficult to see how this cut will not negatively impact programs, services, beds offered, and hours of operation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. Borough President Reynoso looks forward to working with the Council throughout the budget process to ensure that DYCD and ACS have the resources they need to provide our youth with robust opportunities for success.



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

ANTONIO REYNOSO

Brooklyn Borough President

City Council Committee on Criminal Justice Hearing on the FY25 Preliminary Budget 3.8.24

Good afternoon Chair Nurse and members of the Criminal Justice Committee. Thank you for holding this hearing today. My name is Hannah May-Powers and I am here today on behalf of Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso to state unequivocally that Rikers Island must be closed by the legally mandated date of August 31, 2027.

According to the Vera Institute, the Department of Correction spends more than [\\$556,000](#) per year per person currently incarcerated on Rikers Island. This is nearly [350%](#) more per person than the Los Angeles and Cook County (Chicago) systems. Yet Rikers Island remains a humanitarian crisis. Even a single death of an incarcerated person is too many; however, 30 people have died on Rikers Island alone since January 2022.

Despite these egregious numbers, Mayor Adams wants to cut funding to some of the most impactful, research-driven programs that help to keep people out of jail. These budget cuts include:

- \$6.7 million for alternatives to incarceration;
- \$13 million for supervised release; and
- \$8 million for reentry services.

Overall, there is a proposed 3.3% decrease in DOC's budget from FY24 to FY25, less than many other critical City agencies are slated to receive. The most bloated areas of spending for DOC - 88.3% of agency expenses - are staff salaries, benefits, and overtime (overtime costs skyrocketed to \$254 million in 2023). There are approximately 901 current vacancies of uniformed DOC employees, yet even with these, the ratio of uniformed staff to incarcerated individuals is more than four times the national average. [Rightsizing](#) DOC by cutting these vacancies could free up \$162 million in FY 2025 alone, which could be re-allocated to programs and services that keep people out of jail and keep incarcerated people safe.

It is also necessary to hold uniformed DOC employees accountable for chronic absenteeism. They have unlimited sick leave, and many abuse this benefit. For example, as of December 2023, the number of uniformed DOC officers taking [sick leave](#) is nearly twice that of the pre-pandemic rate within the department. Approximately 8.49% of uniformed DOC employees are out on sick

leave on any given day, which is more than twice the rate of NYPD and FDNY, agencies that also have unlimited sick time for uniformed staff.

Relevant budget areas that need the Council's attention include:

Justice-Involved Supportive Housing and the “mental health safety net”: As part of its commitment to closing Rikers, the administration promised an additional 380 supportive housing units specifically for people who have been incarcerated. Supportive housing provides those leaving incarceration with the supportive services they need to succeed, including mental health care, and [has been found](#) to reduce recidivism. Yet the administration has not delivered on this goal.

The commitment also included investment in community-based services to reduce the number of people ending up in jail as a result of behavioral health issues. Yet Rikers still functions as New York City's largest mental health facility, with a 41% increase in the number of people incarcerated there who have a serious mental illness since January 2022. And the care they are receiving there is woefully inadequate. Incarcerated people with both physical and mental health concerns report missing necessary medical appointments, and thousands of people are shuffled between psychiatric facilities and jails without receiving long-term, meaningful mental health treatment. Instead of languishing in jails, people with mental health concerns who are or have been incarcerated deserve compassionate care.

Board of Correction headcount: The Board of Correction is a critical oversight body that helps to keep incarcerated people safe. However, the number of BOC officials is not proportionate to DOC's headcount. Increasing BOC's headcount to 1% of DOC's would bring more eyes to the thousands of complaints filed by incarcerated people that BOC is tasked with reviewing annually. This expansion would only add about \$4 million to the overall expense budget. Despite the need for additional staff, Mayor Adams has proposed that BOC reduce their staff from 25 to 29 positions.

Alternatives to Incarceration: It is extremely concerning that, earlier this week, the City's Budget Director suggested that the legally mandated timeline for closing Rikers will not be met. There are currently approximately 6,200 people incarcerated on Rikers Island, or almost 3,000 more people than the borough-based jails were originally intended to hold. Rather than funding ATI programs, the administration is simply attempting to add more beds to the new jails, for example increasing the number of planned beds at the women's jail in Queens by more than 200%. While this administration claims it simply cannot lower the population of incarcerated people enough to close Rikers, it leaves ATI programs underutilized and under-funded. For Rikers to close on time and to ensure that people are not being held unnecessarily behind bars, the administration must support ATI.

Investment in youth: Youth programs, such as after school activities, sports, summer jobs, and other initiatives provide school-aged children the opportunity to connect with peers and mentors. These programs also help to keep youth engaged and avoid criminalized behaviors.

Borough President Reynoso supports the call from advocates to fully fund these programs, and we will present more detailed recommendations at the Education and Youth Committee budget hearings.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this hearing today. We know that the City Council cares deeply about the well-being of the currently and formerly incarcerated and their loved ones, and the Borough President looks forward to working with you to ensure that we keep our commitments to all New Yorkers and address the many injustices happening daily on Rikers Island. It is time to reinvest our public dollars to supporting our neighbors instead of incarcerating them.



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

ANTONIO REYNOSO

Brooklyn Borough President

City Council Committee on Education Hearing on the FY25 Preliminary Budget 3.18.24

Good morning Chair Joseph and members of the committee and thank you for holding this hearing today. I am here today on behalf of Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso to fight for critical and important programs across Brooklyn and New York City public schools.

The FY25 Preliminary Budgets for the Department of Education (DOE) and School Construction Authority (SCA) are concerning for a number of reasons. Crucial long-term initiatives such as 3-K and Pre-K, Community Schools, restorative justice, post-secondary readiness programs, and much more are threatened with cuts. With the expiration of federal COVID relief funding, our schools' financial situation is dire. Yet new projections from the IBO expect billions more in available funding in FY25 than previously predicted. So while some cuts may be necessary, we should be using data and evidence to ensure that our education budget is serving our 915,000 students and families, with a priority for those with the most need.

Borough President Reynoso is particularly concerned about the following initiatives:

Early Childhood Education

Parents across Brooklyn are calling for expansion – not reduction – of early childcare programs, especially Pre-K and 3-K. In fact, the number of NYC families utilizing 3-K more than doubled between SY2019 (17,500 students) to SY2022 (35,700 students). The federal standard for affordable childcare is 7% of household income, yet according to the Citizens Committee for Children, childcare costs in Brooklyn could represent up to 63% of a family's income. According to the same study, more than 80% of NYC families with children under age five are unable to afford childcare.

This is unsustainable, and underscores that access to free and low-cost childcare can make the difference between a family staying in New York City or being forced to leave. It is essential that these programs remain available to every family, regardless of special needs or immigration status. Yet more than 150 Brooklyn 3-K classes could be on the chopping block, including many in our borough's highest poverty districts, as well as 19 integrated classes for students with and without special needs, and 24 preschool special education programs. Borough President Reynoso is ready to fight alongside the Council to address the \$263M funding gap for early

childhood education, and to expand these programs to ensure free, high-quality childcare is available to all. We must also ensure that our childcare providers are receiving a livable wage and are paid on time.

Special Education

Historically, the DOE has failed to serve this population, and even as the agency seeks to meet its court ordered milestones to provide students with mandated services and address processing delays, there is still much room for improvement. The increase in 94 full-time staff for processing special education claims and expediting hearings represents progress, and should help address the backlog in Carter Cases (now estimated at \$200M for FY2025). Yet the need remains for support for other programs, such as SEED (discussed below) and filling the \$96M funding gap in preschool special education.

School Climate & Culture

School-based support programs are critical for our youth, and it is disappointing that we have to 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 expansion of community schools from 266 in SY2020-2021 to more than 400 today is laudable, yet this is only sustainable with a consistent funding source. While the administration thankfully restored its FY2024 cuts, the program still faces uncertainty, with looming cuts to 48 community schools serving 18,000 students, 82% of whom are low-income. Community schools now face a \$67M funding gap for FY2025 and outyears.
- **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, including 90+ schools in Brooklyn.
- **Sensory Exploration, Education and Discovery (SEED).** DOE recently published a report “Reimagining Special Education” in conjunction with a task force of over 45 parents, educators, and advocates. The recommendations note the growing population of students living with autism, and the need to increase capacity and programs for them. The Borough President supports this vision, but once again notes that these programs are only viable with sustainable funding. Yet this administration is proposing a record disinvestment of \$22.5M from SEED.
- **Bilingual Programs, Translation, and Interpretation Services.** New York City’s strength is in its diversity, and this is especially evident in Brooklyn, where over 150 languages are spoken on a given day. To serve these communities, and the growing population of migrant arrivals, we must support Dual Language and Bilingual education programs, as well as language translation and interpretation services for our schools and parents, including the Presidents Council, School Leadership Team (SLT), and Community

Education Councils (CECs). Districts such as District 20, where 23% of students are English Language Learners, need these programs. Yet once again, the programs face a \$17M gap.

Sustaining Capacity & Critical Staff

Budget cuts not only threaten our students, but they hit our support workers as well. Currently an estimated 625 staff such as school social workers, school psychologists, family workers, and shelter-based coordinators face layoffs. Borough President Reynoso has long been an advocate for equitable access to social workers in our schools, yet in Brooklyn, the proposed cuts would leave the underserved community of Bed-Stuy with no social workers at all, exacerbating inequities in an already inequitable system.

School Construction Authority

The Borough President is happy to see \$4B identified for new seat construction in SCA's preliminary 2025-2029 Capital Plan and more than 7,000 new seats specifically to be built for Brooklyn by 2027. We echo the concerns and calls from parents and advocates to address overcrowding in the most overcrowded districts, such as 20. While this is a step in the right direction, the Borough President calls for further investments in meeting class-size compliance for future years. 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Borough President Reynoso will continue to stand with the Council to demand investment in our youth and to ensure that every student can access quality education, dynamic programming, and needed support services.



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

ANTONIO REYNOSO

Brooklyn Borough President

City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations Hearing on the FY 2025 Preliminary Budget 3.12.24

Good afternoon Chair Rivera, and congratulations on leading this very important committee in the new term. I am here on behalf of Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso to call upon the administration to restore cuts to our libraries and cultural institutions.

The administration's budget projections, cuts, and restorations have been unpredictable and lacking in transparency. Yet recent analysis from the Independent Budget Office predicts a [\\$3.3 billion surplus](#) for FY 2025, and the administration itself now says that its projections are rosier than expected. Yet rather than restoring cuts to our libraries and cultural institutions, they instead chose to uphold cuts to the libraries and double down on cuts to cultural organizations, forcing both to make difficult choices about cuts to staff, programming, operating hours, and more.

Mayor Adams recently called libraries "a lifeline to countless communities and the great equalizer." On this, Borough President Reynoso agrees – libraries provide critical services for youth, older adults, immigrants, the formerly incarcerated, and really everyone who wants to expand their mind and learn new skills. Mid-year budget cuts are already having a huge impact, with the loss of Sunday service citywide, yet the administration did not include the libraries in its January restorations. Given the new budget projections, the administration must restore funding to the libraries to reinstate Sunday service and support for critical programs.

Similarly critical are our cultural institutions, which faced sharp cuts both in November and January. The cuts have the most outsized impact on small non-profits and organizations run by and serving people of color, which are [often called upon](#) to serve their communities in myriad ways [other than just arts programming](#). It also impacts the anchor institutions of the CIG, cutting into programming that serves communities citywide, especially our youth. Organizations say that these cuts have already resulted or will result in cuts to after-school and youth workforce programs, programs for the elderly, jobs for full-time staff and teaching artists, festivals and celebrations, and even closures or suspension of programs.

Put simply, these cuts are bad for the City's bottom line. [A letter from the CIG](#) to the mayor asserts that for every \$1 of City funding, the institutions leverage at least \$3 in philanthropic

contributions. And as you, Chair Rivera, pointed out in a [recent op-ed](#), cultural activities are an important economic driver for the city, generating \$22 billion annually, a 99:1 return on what the City spends. Borough President Reynoso urges the Council to work proactively to restore cuts to the Cultural Development Fund and the CIGs, and to explore once again significantly supplementing DCLA's budget in recognition of the difficult years cultural organizations have faced recovering from the pandemic.

Finally, I want to address DCLA's capital budget. Borough President Reynoso has testified about this twice before, but the problem remains – DCLA does not facilitate property acquisition with its capital dollars, making it very difficult for small cultural organizations to find and secure permanent homes. Being at the mercy of a private landlord in our competitive real estate market can make long-term planning difficult. These groups should be focusing on their work, not worrying about losing their space. The BP has substantial capital resources to allocate to Brooklyn and wants to use them to help groups find permanent spaces, yet remains frustrated that he cannot extend this resource to cultural organizations due to this unnecessary limitation. He encourages the Council and administration to work together to address this in FY25.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. Borough President Reynoso looks forward to working with the Council to support our libraries and cultural institutions as they continue to bounce back from the very difficult pandemic times and thrive into the future.



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

ANTONIO REYNOSO

Brooklyn Borough President

**City Council Committee on Governmental Operations, State & Federal Legislation
Hearing on the FY25 Preliminary Budget 3.5.24**

Good afternoon and thank you to Chair Restler and the Committee on Governmental Operations for holding this hearing today. This is my third budget cycle as Brooklyn Borough President, and the third time I am submitting budget testimony about community boards to this committee (which has oversight) even though they are not on the hearing 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.

It is worth noting that adding community boards to today's agenda would be difficult, since there is no one agency responsible for supporting their work. In practice, each community board is its own independent agency. However, due to their very small budgets, the boards cannot exercise the full complement of services generally performed by a City agency, including but not limited to procurement, human resources, and information technology support, without assistance. In fact, because of their extremely limited budgets – with no baselined increase since 2014 - the boards are struggling just to maintain their basic Charter-mandated functions.

Accordingly, the City Charter tasks both Borough Presidents and the Civic Engagement Commission (CEC) with providing technical assistance and training to community boards. However, my office is simply not funded to provide the full scope of the support and technical assistance that the boards need to meet and exceed their Charter-mandated functions, and the Civic Engagement Commission is facing major proposed budget cuts that will hinder their already limited work in this area.

Perhaps because the CEC is a relatively new office, created by Charter Revision in 2019, they are one of many newly created Mayoral offices that are not currently assigned to a City Council Committee for oversight. I urge the Speaker to take action on this, as the Mayor's proposed cuts to the CEC will have consequences not only for community boards, but also for the CEC's other Charter-mandated functions, such as administering citywide participatory budgeting. The Council should have the opportunity to question the administration about these proposed cuts.

The situation wherein three entities – the community boards themselves, the Borough Presidents’ Offices, and the CEC – all have a role in ensuring that the boards can carry out their duties, yet all three are underfunded and understaffed to do so, is why I am calling for the creation of a new Office of Community Boards that would become a central resource for assisting the boards with technology, policies and procedures, human resources, legal counsel, training, and other needs. I know this is a big ask when the city is facing difficult financial times; however, it’s a question of equity. No other City agency goes without vital support services, and the community boards should not have to, either.

Examples of services that the Office of Community Boards could provide, which District Managers from across the city are asking for, include:

- Professional technical assistance in land use planning to inform the boards’ role in the ULURP process;
- Assistance with identifying public meeting space that meets accessibility requirements;
- Human resources and legal support, including guidance on hiring and firing staff, approval of job postings, and training for both staff and board members on discrimination, harassment, and meeting procedures;
- Communications and technology support, including holding and livestreaming hybrid meetings, producing website and social media content, and creating flyers and mailers in multiple languages;
- IT and procurement support, including assistance with office computer issues, email and website creation and maintenance, purchasing, and paying bills;
- Equity and accessibility at meetings, including translation services, food, and childcare; and
- Supporting meaningful engagement from City agencies on the budget process.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I look forward to working with the Council and the administration on ways to support our community boards in serving all New Yorkers.



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

ANTONIO REYNOSO

Brooklyn Borough President

City Council Committee on Hospitals Hearing on the Preliminary Budget 3.5.24

Good afternoon, Chair Narcisse and thank you for holding this hearing today. I am here to say that we must invest in our public hospitals in order to maintain appropriate staffing levels, robust programs addressing maternal health and mental health, and high-quality care. Health equity in our hospitals is ensuring that patients receive the quality care and attention that they deserve. We applaud this administration for listening to our calls last fiscal year to successfully give our public sector nurses a contract that includes pay parity and safe staffing for critical care patients. This is only the first step in ensuring that our most vulnerable New Yorkers get the care they need.

The Preliminary Budget includes \$3.06 billion funding for H+H in Fiscal 2025, of which \$2.97 billion is City funds. Although this investment is 68% greater than the FY24 adopted budget, it still puts H+H at an operating deficit of \$51 million for FY25, which will progressively decrease between FY26 and FY28 should funding levels remain the same. (Of this investment, however, it must be noted that 59% is dedicated to asylum-seeker related services.) The most concerning cuts are those that impact the mental health of some of our most vulnerable New Yorkers. Compared to the FY24 budget at adoption, this includes:

- A decrease of \$5.7 million, or 31.3%, in the B-HEARD program
- A decrease of \$1.3 million, or 11% in the Mental Health Service Corps

B-HEARD has shown progressive improvements in staffing and responsiveness, at 25% during Q3 & Q4 of 2023 compared to 15% of total 911 call responses during the first two quarters of FY23. It has also increased the number of calls eligible for B-HEARD response, with 42% being connected to community-based behavioral health services.¹ Up to half of people who become victims of police violence have a mental health disability,² but 911 has become one of the main options for helping people in mental health crisis. Police officers are not trained social workers or counselors and lack comprehensive training to address situations of mental health crisis, often leading to tragic bodily harm and death. Individuals with untreated mental health illness are 16 times more likely to be killed during a police encounter compared to others who encounter police for other issues.³ Unfortunately, individuals who are Black and Latinx make up a disproportionate

¹ [The Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health Announces Increase in B-HEARD Response Rate, Further Ensuring Community-Based Mental Health Crisis Support - Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health \(cityofnewyork.us\)](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/commh/downloads/pdf/2023-09-14-announcement-bheard-response-rate-increase.pdf)

² <https://time.com/5857438/police-violenceblack-disabled/>

³ <https://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/storage/documents/overlooked-in-the-undercounted.pdf>

percentage of those who are unjustly killed.⁴ Programs like B-HEARD help triage care to mental health professionals as first responders to ensure that New Yorkers suffering from mental health crisis are treated with a trauma-informed and cultural-competent approach, preventing avoidable deaths. A divestment in this program could impact continued program expansion.

Of similar concern is the divestment in the Mental Health Service Corps, a workforce development program that integrates behavioral health into a variety of settings including primary care, women's health, pediatrics, and other non-behavioral health care settings, which may impact the number of providers in the program. Since its launch in 2020, the program has provided over 2,700 New Yorkers with mental health services at 48 clinical sites in the Health + Hospitals system, including 76% located within areas with federally-designated mental health professional shortages.⁵ My office's [Brooklyn Comprehensive Plan](#) shows the high rates poor mental health among communities of color, with a focus in South Williamsburg, Brownsville, East New York, Sunset Park, Borough Park and Coney Island. Those who need these services are vulnerable and underserved populations, including those identifying as LGTQIA+, domestic violence survivors, hate crime survivors, asylum seekers and recent immigrants, veterans, and people with disabilities, among others. In communities with the lowest connection to mental health care, only 20% of those with mental health needs receive treatment.⁶ Mental Health Corps services become critical lifelines for residents who cannot afford mental health care.

Cuts to these two programs will only contribute to the cycle of incarceration because of mental illness, increasing correctional health care costs. The National Alliance on Mental Illness estimates that between 25% and 40% of all mentally-ill Americans will be jailed or incarcerated at some point in their lives, compared to 6.6% of the general population.⁷

The anticipated operating losses will also result in lost opportunities for investments that are critical to improving maternal health care.

Currently, New York City faces one of the most severe maternal mortality crises, with Brooklyn having the highest rates. According to DOHMH's 2011-2015 Maternal Mortality Report, Black and Brown birthing people are dying at eight times the rate of their White counterparts. When I was elected, I promised that I would make Brooklyn the safest place to give birth. During my first year, I invested my entire capital budget of \$45 million to three Brooklyn H+H hospitals – Woodhull, South Brooklyn, and Kings County – so that they could improve their NICU and Mother-Baby Units and build state-of-the-art birthing centers. I hope that these capital investments will allow our hospitals to in turn, invest in its personnel.

Of these personnel improvements, I want to call attention to our midwifery workforce. Midwives are critical to reducing maternal death rates. Midwives work with patients throughout their prenatal and postpartum experience to offer clinical assessments, guidance, and emotional support. However, perhaps most important, they center a philosophy of care built on a trusting partnership between midwife and the childbearing person, prioritizing their autonomy, self-

⁴ <https://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/storage/documents/overlooked-in-the-undercounted.pdf>

⁵ <https://mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us/impact-stories/client-stories/a-new-generation-of-mental-health-clinicians>

⁶ <https://mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2023-OCMH-Annual-Report.pdf>

⁷ [Fact Sheet: Incarceration and Mental Health | Weill Cornell Medicine Psychiatry](#)

determination, and satisfaction, and ensuring informed decision-making in a safe and trusting environment. In fact, my wife had two successful births at Woodhull Hospital in large part due to the care of midwives. According to a NIH [2023 study](#), the inclusion of midwives as part of the birthing team is associated with “fewer emergency Caesarean sections, higher rates of vaginal births, lower rates of episiotomies, and shorter neonatal stays in intensive care units.” If appropriately integrated into the healthcare delivery system, midwives could help avert 41% of maternal deaths, 39% of neonatal deaths and 26% of stillbirths; even a moderate increase in staffing can avert deaths by 22%.⁸

When I started my fatherhood journey, I was disappointed to learn that of our three Brooklyn H+H hospitals, Woodhull is the only Brooklyn H+H hospital that has centered midwives in obstetric care for our birthing people. In 2021, 72.4% of its births were attended to by a licensed midwife, while this number was disproportionately lower at Kings County Hospital and South Brooklyn Health Hospital at 7.5% and 12.2%, respectively.² In the same year, the cesarean birth rate in Woodhull was 23.3%, while it was 34.3% in Kings County and 34% in South Brooklyn Health.⁹ I was further surprised to learn that at Kings and South Brooklyn Health hospitals, midwives were not always playing a leadership role, and some Birthing Suites housed only one midwife.

Midwives need to be a part of a patient’s care journey from Day One. We need a collaborative model where midwifery care is strong, autonomous and integrated part of perinatal care and hold leadership roles. This requires a significant investment to ensure that we pay obstetricians and midwives appropriately, so we are adequately staffed to allow for a partnership model to thrive.

I am deeply concerned about the implications of this budget on state of care among our public hospitals. New York State Department of Health’s January 2024 [Study on the Healthcare System of Inequities and Perinatal Access](#) demonstrates that a significant proportion of Brooklyn residents, especially those with commercial insurance are electing to access care outside of Brooklyn. Those who do elect to stay in Brooklyn for perinatal care are not going to our public hospitals. The majority of births in Brooklyn are happening at private institutions – 29% in Maimonides, 19% in NYU Langone BK, and 17% at NewYork-Presbyterian/Methodist. There is no reason Brooklyn’s public hospitals should fall behind and it must start from proper investments in fair wages and adequate staffing for maternal and mental health.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to working with the Council throughout the budget process to ensure that our public hospitals have the support they need to provide equitable and quality care.

⁸ <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2023/may/expanding-role-midwives-address-maternal-health-crisis>

⁹ <https://health.data.ny.gov/Health/Hospital-Maternity-Information-Beginning-2008/net3-iygw/data>



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ANTONIO REYNOSO

Brooklyn Borough President

**City Council Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Hearing on the FY25 Preliminary Budget
March 14, 2024**

Thank you Chair Brooks-Powers and members of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure for holding this hearing today. As Brooklyn Borough President, I have many transportation priorities for our great borough, all of which are aimed at ending car culture and encouraging residents to use more efficient and sustainable modes of transportation, including walking, biking, and public transit.

Critically, we need a robust financial commitment to the NYC Streets Plan, which the administration all but abandoned in 2023. DOT has completed only a fraction of the mandated bike lanes, bus lanes, and public plazas mandated by law, and announcements for new projects have slowed to a halt. Of the projects completed, the majority have been done in-house using expense funds and DOT headcount. The City should be bolstering this in-house capacity, but the preliminary budget proposes keeping vacancies unfilled and imposes PEGs on traffic and street operations, signaling that the administration intends to keep DOT understaffed.

DOT has talented and passionate personnel ready to implement lifesaving streets projects across the city, and the budget needs to give them the resources to complete this work. As the coming implementation of congestion pricing will encourage more people to switch to public transportation, it is vital that we invest in critical infrastructure to speed up our buses, paratransit, and emergency vehicles, and keep pedestrians and cyclists safe.

As Borough President, I remain committed to Vision Zero: no one should die on New York City's streets. This preliminary budget does not agree; in addition to cutting in-house capacity, it includes cuts to Vision Zero education and outreach programming. While infrastructure and design are the foundation of Vision Zero, these cuts are emblematic of a complete disregard for the program's goal to reduce traffic violence.

While I am encouraged by City Hall's interest in sustainable delivery, the administration should first fully support the existing freight mobility staff and initiatives within DOT and outlined in the *Delivering Green* plan with the Economic Development Corporation (EDC). The recent announcement of six waterfront shipping hubs is a step in the right direction, but I am concerned by the absence and continued uncertainty surrounding the Red Hook Container

Terminal, which should remain a centerpiece of the city's freight infrastructure and receive renovations and upgrades as proposed in *Delivering Green*.

DOT's Curb Management Action Plan is an exciting step towards using the city's valuable curb lanes for more than just car storage, which should be expanded in the coming years. DOT should follow through on the Local Delivery Hub and *LockerNYC* pilot programs to reduce the negative environmental and safety effects of truck deliveries.

Open Streets are a vital part of Brooklyn's public realm. Streets are not just where New Yorkers travel, they are where we rest, socialize, and relax. I will continue to advocate for funding and expansion of Open Streets and Summer Streets across the borough.

Finally, I would like to discuss the future of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (BQE). In February, the Federal Highway Administration rejected the administration's application for federal funds to rebuild the triple cantilever in Brooklyn Heights. This proposal was a temporary fix that included too many lanes and ignored community needs along the entire BQE corridor. DOT should continue to work to secure funds from the Federal government through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to pursue a full redesign of the BQE corridor that centers racial justice, equity, and climate mitigation.

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, our freight network, and the BQE corridor.



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

ANTONIO REYNOSO

Brooklyn Borough President

City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Hearing on the FY25 Preliminary Budget 3.14.24

Thank you Chair Abreu and members of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management for holding this hearing today. As former Chair of this committee from 2014-2021, I remain deeply invested in a comprehensive approach to waste management that centers sustainability and environmental justice and engages all New Yorkers in doing their part. I am therefore concerned about this administration's approach to the FY 2025 DSNY budget, and want to discuss the implications of cuts both proposed and already implemented.

Administrative Staffing, Outreach and Communications: I am very disappointed by the cuts to DSNY's budget for outreach and communications, as well as the unexplained cut of 321 civilian administrative positions in FY 2025. This year, DSNY will begin to implement one of its most transformative programs, Commercial Waste Zones (CWZ). It will also rollout curbside organics collection to Manhattan, and begin requiring residential building owners to containerize their trash. All of these programs are complicated, and require significant planning, oversight, and – most critically – public engagement in order to be successful. They represent major shifts in how NYC collects its waste, and examples from other cities show us that messy rollouts can threaten programs long-term. Additionally, according to the MMR, the city's curbside and containerized recycling diversion rate actually went down this year to just over 16%, short of DSNY's goal of 23%, which itself is lower than that of many other major cities. Education and outreach are critical to getting this number up. Given all this, cutting outreach, education, and staffing for implementation seems short-sighted and particularly unnecessary given recent re-estimates that predict a budget surplus of over \$3 billion in the next fiscal year.

Solid Waste Management Plan: All of this applies also to another important project: creation of the 2026 Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP). This critical plan will guide solid waste management in New York City for the next 20 years. 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. One of the November PEGs cancelled a planned consultant contract for support in developing the 2026 plan, and my understanding is DSNY intends to bring this in-house. How can we expect another transformative plan that

incorporates input from our communities, given the staffing and outreach cuts to the agency outlined above? City Council must insist that more attention and funding be allocated to creation of this critical plan.

Community composting: I have already been on record multiple times expressing my disappointment with the administration's decision to end community composting programs, and asking for restoration of the cuts imposed in November. To summarize, community composting is not "inefficient," as DSNY has implied; rather, these organizations provide an important resource for our communities by:

- diverting millions of pounds of food waste from landfills every year;
- providing free compost to the Parks Department, community organizations, street tree maintenance, school gardens, Botanical Gardens, and community gardens;
- creating jobs; and
- playing a critical role in educating youth and the public about the value and mechanics of composting.

As my colleagues and I said in a letter we sent to Mayor Adams in December, in the scale of the City's budget, \$3 million is a drop in a very large bucket, yet it has an outsized impact on our zero waste goals and our ability to educate New Yorkers about sustainable practices. Not only are these cuts unnecessary, but pushing local groups off of public lands, even after they located bridge funding to temporarily sustain operations, seems particularly cruel. While it's not my borough, even I know that BIG Reuse's site at Queensbridge is a beloved local resource, and a much better use of space than a parking lot. Leaving the Lower East Side Ecology Center with no home after almost four decades of operation in NYC is unacceptable. I join my colleagues, including Speaker Adams and Finance Chair Brannan, in calling for restoration of the cuts to these vital organizations.

Brooklyn District 13/15 Garage: Finally, on DSNY's capital plan, I want to again express my disappointment that Brooklyn's District 13/15 garage is once again 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, and National Grid recently [sold the site](#) to a real estate company for \$51 million. Now we must go back to the drawing board to find these garages a new, long-term home.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I stand ready to support this Council in reinstating funding for the programs outlined above and look forward to working with you all to continue transforming waste collection in New York City.