



TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO  
THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE  
Hearing Regarding Proposed Legislation

Monday, October 25, 2021

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Thank you, Chairperson Steven Levin and members of the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare, for the invitation to submit testimony from the Council of Family and Child Caring agencies (also known as COFCCA). COFCCA represents over fifty New York City child welfare agencies, organizations that provide foster care, juvenile justice, and child maltreatment prevention services to many thousands of families. Our members range from large multiservice agencies to small community-based preventive services programs in community districts around the City. We welcome the opportunity to speak about the various legislative measures on the agenda today on behalf of the child welfare provider community.

**Int 1304 - Authorizing council members and the public advocate to visit and inspect detention facilities**

This legislation is worded to include programs “administered in whole or in part” by the Administration of Children’s Services (ACS) and specifically mentions non-secure detention (NSD), meaning the nonprofit organizations operating NSD programs for the City would be included. These programs are highly-structured and organized for the physical and psychological safety of the residents and staff, including daily routines and monitoring activities. At the same time, these programs are designed to be as home-like as possible, given the population, and therefore do not have the structural security or staffing levels of secure facilities. While the program providers welcome opportunities to display their sites and discuss the impact their programs have had on juvenile justice-involved youth, unannounced visits can be disruptive, and also may conflict with regulations from the Office of Children and Family Services, the entity that licenses these facilities. We encourage the council



to amend Int 1304 to specify that while visits may occur at different times of day, that providers will receive notice of visits before they occur to ensure the safety of all involved.

**Int 2405 - Runaway and homeless youth eligibility for rental assistance**

Several of the nonprofits that provide child welfare services also operate Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) programs for the Department of Youth and Community Development. The young people in these programs have often endured many hardships before entering RHY programs, including physical abuse, sex trafficking, addiction, and family rejection based on pregnancy, sexual identity, or gender identity. RHY programs provide services that specifically address the needs of homeless youth and young adults. It is cruel for the City to further traumatize these young people by forcing them to enter the adult shelter system to secure rental assistance. Viewed through a financial lens, it makes no sense for the City to fund the youths' stay in RHY programs and then pay the adult homeless shelters to house the same youth for the additional time required for them to receive rental assistance under the current process. We wholeheartedly support making rental assistance more available to youth by counting time spent in RHY programs for CityFHEPS eligibility. Our only request is that the bill also encompass youth in Transitional Independent Living programs, which are also operated under DYCD auspices and from which youth "age out" on their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. These youth as well struggle to acquire housing and are not covered under other rental assistance programs.

Youth involved with juvenile justice and runaway/homeless youth are often cast aside or ignored; we greatly appreciate the Committee's interest in their safety and well-being. As always, we at COFCCA would be happy to answer any questions the Council members may have, or to arrange for members to see their local child welfare agencies in action. We thank you for allowing us to submit our testimony.

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