



David A. Hansell, Commissioner
Testimony to the New York City Council
Committees on Finance, General Welfare, Juvenile Justice, and Women's Issues
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"New York City Council Fiscal Year 2018 Preliminary Budget Hearing"

Good afternoon Chairs Ferreras-Copeland, Levin, Cabrera, and Cumbo, and members of the Finance, General Welfare, Juvenile Justice, and Women's Issues Committees. I am David Hansell, Commissioner of the New York City Administration for Children's Services. With me are Eric Brettschneider, First Deputy Commissioner, Susan Nuccio, Deputy Commissioner of Financial Services, and Felipe Franco, Deputy Commissioner of Youth & Family Justice. I appreciate this opportunity to introduce myself to the Council and to brief you on ACS' Fiscal Year 2018 preliminary budget. I would also like to take some time this afternoon to share with you my vision for ACS and my plan to move the agency forward to improve our work in protecting and supporting children and families.

As many of you already know, I have dedicated my life to serving vulnerable communities. I began my career advocating for the rights, visibility and well-being of children, families and individuals of all backgrounds affected by HIV/AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s. Working on the frontline, I learned the tremendous difference government can make in caring for our most defenseless, and I have carried those lessons with me throughout my career.

I served as Commissioner of the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, which administers New York State's public assistance, income support, child support and homeless housing programs. I have also served in leadership positions at the NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH).

I was honored to serve in the Obama Administration, leading the Administration for Children and Families—a complex agency charged with overseeing over a dozen offices with many functions that parallel ACS', from child welfare, child care and Head Start, to others like family assistance, and community development. While at ACF I helped implement the landmark Fostering Connections to Success Act to promote better services and support for older youth in foster care.

Having led social service agencies for the City, State and Federal governments, I have intimate knowledge of the complexities of these systems, and understand the importance of maintaining positive and constructive relationships between them. I have learned many lessons over the course of my career in public service and have applied those lessons in running government agencies, energizing them, spurring them to innovation and working to improve their performance. This is something I intend to continue here at Children's Services.

Moving ACS Forward

I am honored and humbled to return to city service to lead the Administration for Children's Services. As the Council recognizes, there are few missions more important than that of Children's Services, and I am committed to moving ACS forward and building on the Mayor's historic investment in our agency and our reform agenda. I also recognize that this is immensely challenging work, and that ACS cannot fulfill its mission alone. We must work closely with our partner city agencies, our communities, and with key stakeholders like non-profit provider organizations and, of course, the City Council,

all of whom understand the challenges our families face and are committed to helping families thrive.

This is a critical time for ACS, and I believe that a strong vision must be met with effective management in order to move the agency forward. My job is to build on ACS' accomplishments and the things we are doing well, but also to identify the things we need to do better and to fix what isn't working. I recognize that our success rests on our agency's more than 6,000 committed and courageous staff, so it is imperative that our staff is well equipped and fully supported in their work— whether they are on the frontlines or advancing the agency's mission in another way. With this in mind, I am paying close attention to agency and system-wide issues including data metrics, policies, procedures, tools, trainings and technology.

When the Mayor appointed me last month, I announced a four-point plan that will identify strengths and gaps, and make the necessary changes in areas that significantly impact our ability to protect and safeguard children:

- 1) **First**, I have initiated a top to bottom review of the agency, particularly our protective and preventive functions, and will be making any structural changes necessary to strengthen what's working and to change what isn't. We have engaged three outside entities to independently and comprehensively evaluate work on a systems-level. To assess our safety practices, Casey Family Programs and Eckerd Kids, two nationally recognized organizations with deep child welfare experience, are completing an in-depth review of the way we handle our cases,

using a statistically valid sample to assess our child welfare practice. The goal of the review is to revise and strengthen our child protection and preventive practices and policies. They will also be reviewing all of our current and emerging safety initiatives, including the work of our Investigative Consultants--former NYPD detectives that are now ACS employees and provide crucial law enforcement guidance to assist on child protective investigations. Casey and Eckerd will also review our quality assurance tools, and the Child Advocacy Centers which, as you know, are located in each borough and provide a child friendly, neutral and supportive setting where professionals from multiple disciplines, including ACS CPS workers and NYPD detectives, coordinate and expedite the investigation, prosecution, and delivery of treatment services in cases of child sexual abuse and serious physical abuse. We anticipate these assessments to be completed this Spring. In addition, I have retained a management consultant, the former head of the Los Angeles County Department of Children & Family Services, a jurisdiction very similar to our own, to analyze and help streamline the agency's management structure to ensure that the agency leadership is fully aligned with our reform vision. This work will be done alongside the work of Kroll Associates, Inc., the independent monitor appointed to ACS by the state. We welcome the opportunity to work with Kroll, and look forward to the insight that we will gain from the outcomes of all of these reviews.

- 2) **Second**, we are conducting a full-scale review of all of the findings and recommendations from external reviews and reports issued over the past few

years, including in particular those issued by the Department of Investigation, and will analyze our progress in implementing recommendations, identify those that need to be expedited, and determine the impact of our new assessments and reforms on this process.

- 3) **Third**, as these reviews are underway, we are restructuring our Child Stat quality assurance program, a critical tool that helps us identify and respond to issues of risk, safety, and performance. I am making Child Stat a central part of our operations at ACS and have partnered with the NYPD to apply the best practices from Comp Stat to our Child Stat model to ensure a robust program that encompasses meaningful data metrics and appropriate accountability.
- 4) **Fourth**, in addition to our collaboration on Child Stat, we are working more closely with the NYPD to strengthen our ability to protect children on the front lines. One area of focus is making sure that the NYPD is sufficiently involved in our investigations where there are allegations of criminal activity. Another area is around maintaining the safety of Child Protective Specialists (CPS) as they work in the community. CPS work around the clock in often very challenging circumstances and we have an obligation to make sure that they are safe and protected as they work to make sure our City's children are safe and protected. Both initiatives will be bolstered by the NYPD's expansion of their Neighborhood Policing Program, and we are pleased that our Borough Offices are building stronger relationships with the NYPD's Neighborhood Coordination Officers.

All four components of this plan are well underway and I am confident they will build on our solid foundation of safety reforms and strengthen our safety net. I look forward to sharing our progress with the Council at our Executive Budget Hearing.

Budget Overview

Children's Services' budget for the FY 2018 preliminary budget plan provides for operating expenses of \$3.03 billion, of which approximately \$899 million is city tax levy. Since the beginning of the de Blasio Administration the City has made, at full implementation, a \$155 million annual investment in ACS, including \$122 million to strengthen and improve outcomes for children and families in our Child Welfare system. The funding bolstered ACS' training capacity for our own staff and for our provider agencies by over 300%. The funding also included a historic expansion of preventive services, from 12,500 slots at the end of the previous administration to almost 16,000 slots when fully ramped up. For the first time, families receiving services through our Foster Care and Preventive agencies will receive support from Clinical Consultants, doubling the number of Consultations to 14,000, and providing intensive support to families before and after their children return home from foster care. Last summer ACS launched the Fostering College Success Initiative, enabling over 40 youth in Foster Care to afford college, and we will expand the program to benefit 200 youth in Fall 2018.

Like all agencies across the City, ACS has been asked to identify efficiencies in our budget. I'm pleased to say that we are able to achieve savings of \$13.3 million of recurring savings in the January plan that will in no way impact services to families.

Federal Budget Impact

While the full impact of the Trump Administration's proposed budget remains unclear at this time, the federal Administration's proposals so far are deeply concerning. The Administration has proposed steep reductions in many of the programs on which our most vulnerable families rely, reductions which could dramatically increase economic hardships for them. We stand by and fully support the Mayor and the City Council in fighting against any detrimental impacts the federal budget may pose to the City of New York.

Specific ACS Initiatives

The FY2018 preliminary budget includes additional resources to enhance our ability to support children, families, and our dedicated workforce. These funds will allow us to strengthen the city's safety net for struggling families. As a child and family serving agency with a wide continuum of services, ACS is uniquely positioned to help create a stable, more equitable foundation of opportunity for those we serve. I will dedicate my remaining testimony to highlighting several innovative initiatives.

Family Enrichment Centers

As we implement reforms in our child protective practices, we are continuing to strengthen our support and services for families. We are making significant strides in expanding our preventive services continuum to include primary prevention, which engages families and provides support *before* maltreatment might occur and without involvement in the child welfare system. This summer, ACS will pilot our first Family Enrichment Centers in three high needs neighborhoods. These centers, embedded in the community and operated by three non-profit organizations, will offer an open, welcoming door to all families with programming, classes, activities, and coaching at no cost. They are designed to promote family strength and stability by building community connections and by helping families meet concrete needs, such as housing, financial management, and health. We aim to serve at least one thousand families at each center annually and look forward to working with the Council to extend the reach of these community-based services.

Preventing Safe Sleep Fatalities

As you may know, a significant proportion of child fatalities are attributed to unsafe sleep practices, and in 2015 ACS created a dedicated Office of Safe Sleep to help prevent these fatalities. In 2016, our borough-based staff conducted activities in 38 of the 53 zip codes with the highest rates of sleep-related infant injury deaths, distributed educational materials to 7,000 New Yorkers, and reached out to over 129 agencies and organizations. To reach even more New Yorkers, we are working with

DOHMH to launch a public awareness campaign in May, which will include bus shelter ads, social media promotion, as well as a video and brochure that can be shown to parents of newborns before leaving the hospital. These materials will also help hospitals comply with a new state law that the City advocated for, which requires hospitals and birthing centers to provide information on infant safe sleep practice and crib safety to maternity patients. Funding for our safe sleep initiative is recurring, which will allow us to continue this important work on an ongoing basis.

Making College More Accessible for Youth in Foster Care

All of our young people in foster care deserve to reach their full potential, and the City is committed to expanding pathways to success for our young people transitioning out of foster care. Last year, ACS made the extraordinary promise to provide financial assistance for over 40 young people to attend a CUNY college with tuition, year-round housing and living expenses covered by the City. Through our Fostering College Success Initiative, they are also connected to academic, employment and internship opportunities, and support services to help them succeed. We have created a dedicated Office of College Bound & Support Programs and are delighted that we will be expanding year-round housing to a third CUNY campus later this year. We are also expanding the program to 100 youth this Fall and increasing to 200 youth in FY 2019. In addition, we have broadened financial supports to youth attending the SUNY system.

Cure Violence Initiative

As you know, the City Council awarded \$250,000 to ACS in FY '15 to implement the Cure Violence Crisis Management Initiative. The goal of our adaptation to this initiative is to tap into the network of Cure Violence providers to reduce the likelihood of gun violence in the City and enhance borough-based support for ACS youth in neighborhoods that are most at risk by addressing the underlying contributors to violence. A vital component of Cure Violence engagement strategies is access to community activities and “credible messengers” with whom youth engage when they return to the community.

The five Crisis Management Systems (CMS) providers who implement the Cure Violence model (one from each borough) received \$90,000 (totaling \$450,000) in FY 17 to enhance programming in DYFJ’s continuum. Since the contracted period beginning on August 15, 2016, the CMS providers have run various workshops to serve our youth in secure detention, the Passages Academy, and Non-Secure Placement. With the assistance and input of facility directors, CMS providers have facilitated workshops with youth and families at our Horizon and Crossroads detention facilities during family days, and also engage youth at scheduled times during the day. In the Close to Home program, CMS providers also provide mediation assistance to our staff, and engage our youth in weekly pro-social mentoring groups while on aftercare. To date, the initiative has served 73 youth in detention, and 46 youth in Close to Home.

DYFJ welcomes the Council’s support for ACS’ Cure Violence Initiative in FY 2018, bringing in two additional providers to support Secure Detention facilities. This will

allow us to continue engagement with youth and families within the juvenile justice continuum to keep young people connected to programs that will meet their needs and provide appropriate and positive enrichment activities once they return to the community.

Collective Bargaining Agreement: DC 1707 and Day Care Council

Last fall, for the first time since 2006, District Council 1707/Local 205 and the Day Care Council of New York reached a new Collective Bargaining Agreement to increase wages and provide health insurance through MetroPlus for teachers in ACS' Early Learn system. This monumental agreement affects about 2,700 child care staff and expands funding to another 2,000 union and non-union employees for a total of 4,700 child care staff across 127 contractors-- including both EarlyLearn NYC and City Council funded programs. This agreement brings the salaries of child care teachers into alignment with the starting salaries at community-based Pre-K for All programs by 2020.

The agreement, in effect from October 1, 2016 through September 30, 2020, consists of three major components: Wages, Health Insurance, and Career Ladder.

- Wages: On average, teachers will receive increases of 20-27% from the last collective bargaining agreement. Non-classroom staff will receive the greater of either a 10% wage increase (approximately) or the \$15 minimum wage schedule as announced by the Mayor in January 2016. Additionally, the

agreement funds \$500 incentive payments for each staff member for ratifying the agreement.

- Health Insurance: In partnership with the Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC), the City developed a health insurance plan through MetroPlus Gold that will provide low cost, high quality coverage to the majority of our child care staff-- including part time employees who work 20 or more hours per week. This new plan will significantly reduce employee premiums by over 50% for the vast majority of staff.
- Career Ladder: Career Ladder is an initiative that provides ongoing professional development opportunities for staff. To help support and sustain high quality EarlyLearn staff, Mayor de Blasio allocated \$2.25 million towards a Career Ladder program that will be managed by the Day Care Council of NY and Local 205 Welfare Fund.

Supporting our ACS Workforce

When we invest in our staff, our children and families benefit most. As I said earlier, our staff carry out some of the toughest, most challenging work in this city. Last week, I shadowed two Emergency Children's Services Child Protective Specialists on the job to experience the life of a CPS and to gain a better perspective of their challenges. I will also be visiting every DCP borough office and meeting with our CPS staff across the city to listen and use their expertise and suggestions to make specific changes and inform our larger reform agenda.

I am committed to ensuring that our workforce is afforded consistent opportunities to deepen their professional skills. The ACS Workforce Institute is a \$12 million investment which provides ongoing professional development on core competencies including interviewing and investigation skills, and interpersonal skills necessary for effective family engagement. As of March 10th the Institute has trained a total of 6,666 ACS and provider agency staff, and we are on track to deliver two key refresher trainings by June for Child Protective Specialists, Managers and Supervisors related to proper assessment, investigation, and analysis of evidence to help deepen decision-making skills. We are also pleased that ACS has received approval to offer Continuing Education Units to licensed social workers—one of the only child welfare agencies in the country to do so.

In addition, as the Council suggested last October, we are also proceeding with a Staff Engagement Survey, which will help us identify areas to dedicate more resources for staff—whether it is related to supervision, professional development or work space. I am also paying particular attention to supporting the work of our non-profit partner provider agencies. Our providers are among the best in the nation. While we hold them to high standards, our non-profit providers do great work and I am proud to partner with them in serving the City's children and families.

Conclusion

I am honored to serve the children and families of our City as Commissioner of ACS. The work that ACS and our partner agencies are tasked with and must carry out

every day is nothing short of extraordinary, and I want to take a moment to express my profound gratitude to the thousands of women and men who keep our children safe. I look forward to sharing more about our child welfare, juvenile justice, and early care & education developments in our Executive Budget. I would also like to thank the City Council for your advocacy on behalf of the citizens of New York City, and for supporting our agency's efforts. I look forward to working with all of you, and I welcome your questions.