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Committees on Finance, General Welfare, Juvenile Justice, and Women's Issues
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"New York City Council Fiscal Year 2018 Executive 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. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss ACS' Fiscal Year 2018 Executive Budget with you this afternoon.

I have now had the honor to serve as ACS Commissioner for slightly more than two months. I have spoken with hundreds of staff in all of our program areas, met with most of our provider partners, and visited many of our facilities across the City. Every encounter has increased my admiration for the work that our ACS team and our partner organizations do, each and every day, to protect our children and ensure that our City's safety net for struggling families is as strong as possible. When I testified before you in March, I talked about the top-to-bottom management review I was undertaking, and I want to report to you today about the major results of that review and the reforms it has spurred. I will also talk about the investments that are embodied in the Mayor's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2018, and I will describe a number of significant initiatives we have underway in our child welfare, juvenile justice, and early care & education programs, to promote healthy child development, strengthen families, help young people reach their full potential, and foster thriving communities.

Management Review

I assumed this role knowing that the Council, and the public at large, were concerned about recent incidents in which ACS was involved. Immediately after my appointment as Commissioner, I initiated a top-to-bottom review to identify strengths and gaps throughout the agency, and to make necessary changes in our child protection and preventive work. As a result of this review, we have thus far re-launched a new ChildStat model, enhanced our collaboration with the NYPD, embarked on major initiatives to strengthen our child protective activities, and reinvigorated the response to many prior external investigative findings. I want to describe these activities to you in some detail.

- 1) Re-launching ChildStat: One of my first areas of focus was the restructuring and reinvigoration of the ChildStat model. ChildStat is a vital tool in strengthening the agency's focus on performance accountability around child protection, and building a more unified culture of excellence in practice across all five boroughs. The newly restructured ChildStat launched last week is the result of extensive review and analysis of previous iterations, observation of CompStat, and incorporation of best practices from other jurisdictions. It features the following major components:
 - An emphasis on frequent, rigorous review of randomly selected high risk cases, including ongoing investigations, and a deep analysis of critical performance data;

- Inclusion of regular participation of executive leadership-- myself included—to demonstrate the priority placed on the process;
- A focus on accountability at all levels of the agency;
- Continuity from session to session to ensure that change results from each meeting; and
- Engagement of Division of Child Protection (DCP) management across the city by videocast and through borough-based sessions, to disseminate the learnings and improvements that result.

Our goal is to be rigorous but not punitive, with a focus not on blame but on honest discussion that leads to accountability and quality improvement.

2) Collaboration with the NYPD: NYPD Chief of Detectives Robert Boyce has advised us on the new ChildStat model, based on his CompStat expertise. In addition to advising our ChildStat reforms, NYPD is collaborating on other important areas of our child protective work. Working with the NYPD, we are enhancing our protocols around requesting police assistance in high-risk child protective cases, and have instituted a new notification process to alert the multi-disciplinary team leaders at the Child Advocacy Centers of incoming Instant Response Team cases. NYPD and our Child Protective Specialist (CPS) staff frequently encounter one another in the course of their respective work in the community and, as I mentioned when I was last here in March, our DCP Borough Offices are building stronger relationships with the NYPD's Neighborhood

Coordination Officers on the ground in the community. Now when our CPS workers request police assistance while working in the community, they are more likely to receive this assistance from a familiar face.

- 3) External Agency Reviews: As I discussed at the Preliminary Budget Hearing, Casey Family Programs, a nationally recognized child welfare organization, has conducted a review of system-wide data and a statistically-valid sample of cases to complete a comprehensive assessment of ACS' initiatives, policies, casework practice, and decision-making processes.

Casey's findings and recommendations from their assessment were submitted to ACS last week, and we are currently reviewing them in depth. The assessment found that overall, ACS has a strong system with core safety practices in place, serves as a national model for the collection and use of child welfare data to match services with families' needs, is a national leader in investing in a continuum of preventive services and supports, and generally performs well in relation to other large cities and other jurisdictions in New York State. Casey identified several areas of particular strength, including CPS' overall assessments of children, families, and homes; service referral and linkage; and overall child safety assessment. They also identified areas of opportunity for ACS, the state, and our partners to improve, including modernizing the state's tools for assessing safety and risk, which have been in place for more than 25 years. Casey provided ACS with a set of 12 recommendations for strengthening

our practice. Work is already underway to address several of them, including streamlining our process for updating, communicating, and reinforcing safety policies with our frontline staff. We look forward to working with our partners to analyze Casey's findings, and we will develop solutions that implement all of their recommendations.

In addition, our work with our state-appointed monitor, Kroll Associates, has commenced, and we have found the relationship to be collegial and productive, as we await their recommendations. Kroll has begun to meet staff and has initiated their case review, which will include child protective and preventive cases. We have also received recommendations from our management consultant on organizational structure and process.

Review of External Findings & Recommendations:

Lastly, we have completed our full-scale review of the external findings and recommendations that were issued over the past few years. Our review included an analysis of ACS' progress in implementing recommendations, identification of recommendations that need to be expedited, as well as an assessment of the ways in which recent assessments and reforms impact implementation of the recommendations. Overall, a total of 73 recommendations followed from those recent reviews and reports, and ACS accepted all but five. I am currently reviewing the five recommendations that were previously not accepted by ACS and determining whether any should now be adopted and implemented. Of the

68 recommendations that were accepted, ACS has fully implemented 36, and the 32 remaining are well on their way to full implementation. We have also identified the most significant barriers to implementation of the remaining recommendations and are working to remedy them.

While this management review has been an important immediate component of my work, we have also been moving our reform agenda forward aggressively in many areas, and I'd like to give you an overview of them.

Preventive Services

We are making significant ongoing and new investments in preventive services. The FY 2018 Executive Budget includes funding to continue our 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 in FY 19. The budget provides additional resources to support our partner agencies by funding case conferencing and training activities which I'll describe below. We estimate the increased value of these additions and accompanying citywide wage adjustment increases to be approximately \$1,500 per preventive service slot.

Funding Conference Facilitators

To strengthen decision making and reduce future risk of harm to children after ending preventive cases, ACS instituted new case conferencing protocols in fall 2016, including a requirement that programs invite ACS to facilitate a service

termination conference with families in cases assessed before or during preventive services as having high service needs. This allows for additional safety and risk assessment and strengthening of decision making before closing cases. However, this reform resulted in a lag in preventive case closings, reducing the availability of placements for new cases and contributing to a waitlist for families in need of services. Prior to this change in policy, preventive programs were not required to have these conferences. Many of our provider agencies did not have adequate capacity to attend or facilitate these conferences without taking staff away from their other supervisory roles and conflicting with other areas of their daily work. To meet this need, the FY 18 Executive Budget adds \$11.2 million to support the addition of 147 facilitators at our preventive agencies.

Boosting Training for Preventive Providers

Through the Workforce Institute, ACS is developing a new 12-day onboarding curriculum to support training for new preventive agency staff before they receive any cases. The curriculum will consist of a new two-day course available once a month for all new preventive staff before they take any cases, followed by an additional 10-day course provided every other month, which new staff will complete within 2 months of hiring. In addition, new funding of \$2.45 million will be available to preventive agencies so that they can send staff to six days of required training each year. We recognize that sending front line staff, such as case workers and supervisors, to training has created coverage challenges for preventive agencies. To

address that, ACS will cover the costs associated with case coverage while staff fulfill the new training requirement. Providers can satisfy the training requirement by participating in courses offered by their own or other agencies, as well as at our Workforce Institute.

Contract Reviews

Coming out of the resiliency work with non-profit providers, the Administration has indicated that specific categories of non-profit providers will undergo a model contract review process. ACS intends to begin this process with many of our preventive providers and we expect this review to be completed over the summer. As part of this process, ACS has begun to review preventive contract budgets to assess where more resources may be needed. All of this work is being done in conjunction with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and builds upon the commitments already made in the Executive Budget for funding providers for conference facilitators and training.

Increasing Services for Higher-Risk Families

In expanding our continuum of preventive services, we are making a deliberate effort to bolster services for our higher-risk families under Court-Ordered Supervision. The process began this month for amending contracts with our preventive providers to add 960 additional slots specifically for families under Court-Ordered Supervision or at risk of court intervention. This will be completed by

November. Many of these slots will be concentrated in communities in the Bronx and Brooklyn where a disproportionately high need for services has been identified.

Additionally, ACS will procure 500 slots for services to help families experiencing domestic violence. Remaining funds, up to \$10.4 million, will support an additional 600 slots to expand services for families under Court-Ordered Supervision citywide, including in Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island. Finally, we are also adding \$4.6 million this summer to fund transition support services for families as children are discharged from foster care and reunify with their families.

Promoting Efficiency in Referral Process

The Executive Budget will add \$1.1 million to hire 17 additional staff for ACS' Office of Referral Management, to promote efficiency in our process for making referrals for preventive services. The additional staff will perform several key functions to improve efficiency, such as facilitating communication between DCP and preventive providers to ensure alignment of family need with services provided, performing clearances to ensure child welfare history is well documented in each referral, tracking the availability of preventive slots community by community across the system, and matching children and families with the preventive models that most appropriately meet their needs. The staff will be better equipped to monitor staffing concerns at preventive agencies, and redistribute slots as necessary. This office will also add administrative staff to speed up and track referrals as they are processed by our preventive agencies. In addition, we are working with the respected child

welfare entity Chapin Hall, to analyze our business processes and determine ways in which we can streamline our service referrals even further. In the longer term, we will look at technology support to improve this business process.

Increased Investigative Resources to Address Domestic Violence

Domestic violence has a devastating impact on our families, children and communities. Thirty-eight percent of families with ACS involvement have some history of domestic violence. Tackling domestic violence and its adverse impact on families requires the collaboration of multiple City agencies and provider organizations. As you may know, the Mayor's Office convened a Domestic Violence Task Force, and earlier this month the Task Force issued recommendations for the implementation of a coordinated response to prevent domestic violence, help victims and their families heal, and hold perpetrators accountable.

As part of the Task Force's recommendations and to enhance the child welfare system's ability to intervene in cases involving domestic violence, ACS is extending our Investigative Consultant unit, to support our preventive services providers in service planning and to enhance the safety of children, particularly those who are not yet in school. Currently, our CPS staff have access to Investigative Consultants who can assist them in identifying domestic violence and other safety risks in the course of a child protective investigation. The Executive Budget funds the addition of four Preventive staff and twelve dedicated Investigative Consultants who will assist our preventive providers in cases where domestic violence concerns are

indicated, so that providers have access to the comprehensive family information they need to make thorough safety assessments in their cases.

New Safe Sleep Campaign

On average, about 50 infant fatalities occur each year due to unsafe sleeping practices. As part of our ongoing work to prevent such tragedies, we will launch – one week from today -- our new Safe Sleep public awareness campaign, in partnership with the Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). The multi-pronged campaign will concentrate on zip codes with the highest numbers of Safe Sleep fatalities—mainly in the Bronx and Brooklyn. As you can see, the campaign will feature the simple and clear message that our children’s lives depend on safe sleep practices—infants sleeping alone, on their backs, in their own crib or bassinet and without blankets, pillows, or toys--and will clearly highlight specific unsafe practices, such as sharing a bed with an infant and placing an infant to sleep on the stomach.

The campaign will feature posters in check cashing venues, laundromats, barbershops and salons at 530 locations, 80 bus shelter ads, and the dissemination of over 40,000 brochures in five languages. In addition, there will be promotion on social media and a video should be distributed at the end of June. We will focus our collaboration on hospitals and birthing centers, which are vital messengers of child safety information for maternity patients. We are eager to spread awareness of this important issue, and hope the Council can join us in promoting this campaign.

Child Protection

In the weeks since my appointment as Commissioner, I have met with CPS staff across the city, including visits to three DCP borough offices (toward the goal of visiting all 17 of them in the coming months), shadowed two CPS Units in the field, and visited the Child Advocacy Center in Staten Island. I also plan to meet with each graduating CPS class and will speak to our newest cohort of CPS trainees on May 26 at our James Satterwhite Academy Queens site. My time with our frontline CPS staff has allowed me to hear firsthand from many of them about the challenges they face in their day-to-day work, and has given me the unique opportunity to receive their ideas for improvement, many of which we are moving aggressively to implement.

Enhancing Technological Tools for Frontline Staff

Based in part on the experiences CPS workers shared with me, I have expedited and implemented several technology-related reforms that improve our investigative capacity and resources:

- **First:** As of April 20th, we are providing internet access on all ACS-issued smartphones. CPS staff are now able to use their ACS smartphones to search subject names and addresses, and to help families navigate systems such as housing, public assistance, child care assistance and other benefit programs. Internet access also gives staff the capability to access domestic violence, substance abuse, medical, and mental health resources as needed while working in the community. We have also installed quick access icons on the smartphones

so that helpful materials, such as informational videos, are more readily available to staff, especially when they are working with families in their homes. One such video, “A Life to Love,” speaks to recommended care for infants, including a segment on safe sleep practices that we would like to share with you.

- Second: We are launching a pilot for the deployment of tablet devices for use by our CPS staff. The tablets will provide access to all databases and case records used to research family history in the field, and allow CPS to enter case information directly into the electronic case record system from outside of the office. This will make the use of non-investigative time more efficient for CPS staff – including while waiting for court cases to be called, during travel time to conduct investigations, or between field assignments—and will reduce reliance on paper notes. On June 30th we plan to launch a three-month pilot with 300 CPS staff to evaluate the use of tablets in the field and to assess their experience using the devices. After this trial period we plan to begin distributing tablets to all CPS staff in the fall.
- Third: Our CPS staff are first responders who work in every corner of the city, at every hour of the day, and often encounter dangerous situations. We will continue to seek and support aggressive enforcement of felony provisions for assaulting a CPS worker in the line of duty. And to further promote their safety as they do this difficult work, ACS is procuring an enhanced smartphone app that will activate a request for NYPD assistance when CPS feel they are at risk. The app uses a cord plugged into the smartphone’s headphone jack that will

automatically activate a call for assistance when pulled out of the jack. This is the first of an expanded set of safety enhancements that will be available to our frontline CPS workers.

Bridging Training with Practice

More than 7,200 frontline staff from ACS and our provider agency partners have participated in our learning programs since the launch of the ACS Workforce Institute in early 2016. The Institute, a \$12 million City investment, is a collaboration between ACS and the City University of New York that is designed to build the professional strength of our child welfare and juvenile justice workforce. The Institute is helping our professionals develop and sharpen the interviewing, investigation, and interpersonal skills needed for effective family engagement. The coaching courses offered at the Workforce Institute boost the leadership capacity of frontline supervisors and managers, and deepen their assessment and decision-making skills. But we also want to make sure that the best practices from training and coaching aren't just taught at the Institute, but are built into everyday practice.

This coming year, ACS is placing Workforce Institute coaches in all DCP borough offices. This \$2.3 million annual investment established in the FY 18 Executive Budget will create a dedicated team of coaches who will provide direct support for child protective supervisors and managers to help ensure that the knowledge and skills gained in training programs are transferred and fully integrated into staff's day-to-day work. We expect that the initiative will build a strong bridge between training

and actual practice, improve staff retention, and help maintain a healthy work culture.

We look forward to discussing with the Council additional needs to support our frontline CPS workers, as FY18 budget conversations continue.

Strengthening coordination with Department of Homeless Services

Twenty-five percent of families in the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelter system have child welfare involvement with ACS, and we are committed to expanding our collaboration with DHS to ensure that these families receive the services and interventions they need. This past March, ACS and DHS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that builds on our existing practices to enhance coordination between our agencies and our providers, and to better support ACS-involved families residing in the shelter system. The MOU, which we expect to be fully implemented by this fall, requires ACS and DHS to share information and notify each other at critical points in a family's case, such as when a family ACS serves enters shelter, when there is a plan for a family to change shelter, and when there is a change in a child welfare case that may require a different level of intervention by DHS. In addition, the agreement will also require shelter providers to issue vital information to families, such as information on availability of child care and safe sleep practices for infants.

Family Permanency

One of our most noteworthy achievements has been safely reducing the number of New York City children in foster care to historic lows. As of February 2017, there were 8,993 children in foster care, compared to a census of over 41,000 children in care when ACS was established 20 years ago. We are proud that 90% of children in foster care are placed in family settings rather than in institutional settings—one of the best standards of performance in the country. Through several strategies, such as expanding intensive family supports to stabilize families and employing new approaches to helping relatives and friends care for children, fewer children need to be separated from their families. When foster care is necessary, we have made progress in improving permanency outcomes for children and youth. Nevertheless, we face continuing challenges in reducing the time some children remain in foster care prior to achieving permanency, recruiting the number and range of foster homes we need, and helping older youth transition successfully to independence. I'd like to discuss some of the initiatives we're undertaking to address those challenges.

Achieving Timely Permanency

While the number of children in foster care continues to decline, we know we can do better to achieve permanency, expedite reunification when safe, and reduce long stays in foster care. One of the ways we are working to improve permanency is through our “No Time to Wait” Initiative, which aims to expedite permanency for youth in foster care through several targeted strategies. One such strategy is our

focus on improving family visiting between children and their parents. The majority of children who enter foster care are able to safely return home to their families, and quality visits while the child is in care are critical for promoting reunification. Last year, 2,500 children were reunified with their families, and the proportion of children who re-entered foster care after reunification fell from 9.1% in 2015 to 7.9% in 2016.

Through “No Time to Wait,” we also are helping children achieve permanency through adoption and kinship guardianship. Kin guardianship avoids the need to terminate parental rights, and allows relatives and family friends to care for children with the same financial support as adoptive parents. I will be meeting regularly with the Honorable Jeannette Ruiz, Chief Administrative Judge of the Family Court, to discuss how we can partner more effectively with the courts in many areas, including expediting permanency where termination of parental rights may be required as a prerequisite to adoption. Through increased staff training and streamlining processes such as centralizing birth certificate requests, ACS and our provider partners increased the number of adoptions by 5% from 2015 to 2016, and the number of children achieving permanency through kinship guardianship increased by 25% during the same time period.

All of these efforts have resulted in an 8% reduction from July 2016 to April 2017 in the number of young children aged 12 and under who remain in foster care more than two years. To drive home permanency for all children, we initiated the Rapid Permanency Reviews (RPRs) in partnership with Casey Family Programs. The

RPRs reviewed the cases of 2,500 children who have been in foster care for two years or more to examine the commonalities, barriers, and promising opportunities to expedite permanency. We will complete all of these reviews by the end of this month and are working with our foster care providers, the Family Court, and others to address practice issues related to these cases in real time. We look forward to sharing a plan to address these barriers to permanency at the end of the year as part of our reporting requirements under Local Law 143.

Improving Foster Care Placements

While we are working hard to make sure children spend less time in the foster care system, we are working just as hard to improve their experiences while they are in care. By far, one of the most important impacts on a young person's experience in foster care is the family that cares for them while they are in placement. Ultimately, a foster family becomes among the most significant people in a child's life. While in foster care, we want all of our young people to achieve their developmental milestones and experience childhood as their peers do. Through our "Home Away from Home" initiative we are focused on improving the quality of foster care placements to enhance child well-being. Research shows that children in foster care tend to fare best when placed with relatives, and so we are increasing placements with relatives whenever possible. We are also increasing our pool of foster parents to improve matches between children and foster homes, and we are providing supports to foster parents to help the foster home thrive.

ACS is awarding \$2 million in additional funding over two years to five foster care agencies to pilot new approaches to recruit foster parents and provide support. We have also created a new \$300,000 fund to help cover incidental expenses that foster parents often incur during the foster home certification process, such as making necessary home repairs. In addition, with a \$1.1 million grant from the Conrad Hilton Foundation, we are working with experts to provide intensive assistance to our foster care agencies to develop and support foster homes specifically for older youth.

Transition to Independence for Older Youth in Care

Young people in foster care need wraparound support that actively prepares them -- *before* they transition out of foster care -- with the tools they need to build a successful future. To support older youth in care, we have just issued a concept paper (published on our website) and plan to issue an RFP to re-establish Supervised Independent Living Programs (SILPs), with a capacity of 40 beds. The SILPs will offer short-term, six to twelve-month housing for young adults in foster care ages 18 and older. With the re-establishment of SILPs, older youth in care will once again be able to benefit from home-like settings that prepare them for independent living, and connect them to educational and employment support and to community resources.

ACS will continue to work aggressively to reduce the foster care census, promote kinship placements, and expedite permanency.

Juvenile Justice

I want to take a moment to discuss the tremendous progress ACS and our City partners have made in serving youth and families in the juvenile justice system, which has paved the way for the expansion of our youth and family-focused framework to 16 and 17 year olds under the recently passed Raise the Age legislation. New York City has seen significant improvements in the juvenile justice system over the past several years:

- Juvenile arrests have decreased dramatically, down 55% from 2011 to 2015.
- Admissions to detention decreased by 22% from 2014 to 2016. While admissions are declining, so are lengths of stay in detention, and we consistently see a large percentage of youth staying in detention for less than a day.
- Admissions to non-secure placement are down 31% from 2014 to 2016. In 2016 our Juvenile Justice Initiative (JJI), which is an alternative-to-placement diversion program, served more than 200 young people who would otherwise have been placed in a non-secure placement residence. These youth and their families received intensive in-home, evidence-based therapeutic services along with added educational supports.

Family Assessment Program

As the number of youth in out-of-home juvenile justice residential settings declines, we continue to serve a greater number of young people in our juvenile justice preventive programs. Our Family Assessment Program (FAP) identifies

services and provides referrals to help families work through their challenges *before* the need for court involvement arises. In 2016, FAP served over 5,000 families. For the first time, we are now working to link all youth leaving detention and their families with referrals to our preventive Family Assessment Program, in an effort to help these young people avoid further involvement in the justice system.

Close to Home

As you know, Close to Home allows youth who have been adjudicated juvenile delinquents to be placed in non-secure or limited-secure residences located in or near the five boroughs. Close to Home is guided by a positive youth development framework that recognizes young people's capacity to rise above their challenges with support from their families and communities, and with services and programs that promote social and vocational engagement, education, creative arts, and positive adult and peer mentoring. Our Close to Home program is grounded in a number of key principles, including:

- **Public Safety:** Youth receive intensive supervision and monitoring by program staff. ACS has also created a comprehensive quality assurance and oversight monitoring regimen, which includes inspecting each Close to Home site twice per quarter. In 2016, we made 348 site inspections to 29 Close to Home sites.
- **Family Engagement & Collaboration:** Close to Home is structured to develop, support and maintain permanent connections for the youth and their families, allowing frequent and meaningful opportunities to participate in treatment. Right

now, we are partnering with Community Connections for Youth to provide young people and their families access to coaches and peer mentors to help them navigate the juvenile justice system.

- Evidence-Based & Trauma-Informed Treatment: Almost all of our young people in juvenile justice have experienced trauma. Close to Home uses a strength-based continuum of care that empowers and supports through services that have a proven track record of results.
- Educational Continuity & Achievement: Central to Close to Home is the ability for young people to receive individualized educational services through the Department of Education (DOE), allowing them to earn transferrable academic credits. Of the 191 of our Close to Home students enrolled in the 2015-16 school year, 75% earned academic credit and students passed over 88% of their courses.
- Community Reintegration: Once discharged from residential care, youth remain connected to positive adults, peers, and community supports embedded in their neighborhoods.

Bronx Youth & Family Justice Support Center

A hallmark of our entire continuum of juvenile justice services is our involvement and partnership with families and the community—key assets for helping to prevent youth from entering our system, and helping them prepare to return to their home community from the system. To better support our work with families and the

community, we will open the Bronx Family Support Center next month. The Center, established in partnership with the Vera Institute, is the first of its kind and will be located adjacent to the Bronx Family Court to facilitate engagement and retention of families who have children in Close to Home, and for families in need of or participating in the Family Assessment/PINS Diversion program and alternative programs like JJI. This one-stop center will integrate the services of our entire juvenile justice continuum, so families can be more involved in their children's progress, and brings together local partners like the NYPD, school suspension centers, and community-based service providers.

Raise the Age

We are delighted that New York State will finally treat our young people as young people in our justice system, and we look forward to working with our partners to extend the principles and services of our detention and Close to Home programs to 16 and 17-year-olds, including broadening our community-based programs, expanding our residential continuum to include adolescent detention facilities, and delivering program models and treatments at these facilities that meet the developmental needs of older adolescents. With the success of the young people we've served and the strides we have made to build a juvenile justice system that promotes positive youth development, we join the Mayor, the City Council, and our partner City agencies in embracing the passage of Raise the Age legislation as a critical and long-overdue reform.

ACS is working in partnership with the Mayor's Office and our sister City agencies on planning to implement the initial requirements of the Raise the Age legislation by October 1, 2018. A citywide workgroup meets on a weekly basis to identify and work through specific issues around implementation, such as siting, facility specifications, procurements, funding, and legal and regulatory questions, to name only a few. Our Division of Youth & Family Justice also conducts weekly internal meetings with key ACS divisions and program areas to identify and plan for ACS-specific implementation actions. Much of the City's planning hinges on the clarification of uncertainties in the legislation itself, as well as clarification from state oversight bodies – the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and State Commission of Correction (SCOC) -- on the regulations that will apply to programs for this population of young people.

Raise the Age is a rapidly evolving endeavor. While we continue to examine the costs associated with implementation, we need the State to provide its fair share of funding to support this massive reform. We thank the Council for your advocacy in support of the Raise the Age legislation, and we look forward to working with you on implementation and in advocating with the State for the funds, supports and flexibility needed to make this immensely consequential reform a reality.

Early Care & Education

We are excited to play a pivotal role in the Mayor's expansion of pre-kindergarten, through 3-K for All, to strengthen the continuum of high quality early childhood education for children from birth to five-years-old. Our evolving knowledge of brain development underscores that early childhood is the critical time to shape the foundation for life-long learning, healthy development and growth.

Since 2012, ACS' EarlyLearn NYC has provided high quality, full-day early care and education to over 30,000 children from birth through five-years-old each year. We are proud that this program has become a pillar for promoting healthy childhood development, while also providing wraparound support to families—a hallmark of EarlyLearn NYC. This past fall, ACS rolled out the country's largest early childhood trauma-informed care program, named Trauma Smart, to build our children's abilities to face challenges later in life. In 2016, our centers achieved unprecedented "all clear" audits from the Federal Office of Head Start. As the Council heard in March, we have also implemented a number of reforms to improve the financial stability of our providers.

With the announcement of 3-K for All, the Mayor and the City agencies also recognized that our children and families will benefit greatly from a unified early care and education system that is linked to the larger K-12 system. Given the overlap of DOE's early care and education programs with ACS' EarlyLearn NYC, provided at 380 centers and via 30 family child care networks, EarlyLearn NYC contracts will be integrated into DOE's Division of Early Childhood Education. This integration will create

consistent high quality standards across the publicly-funded early childhood continuum that better transitions to elementary school.

ACS has already been working with DOE to begin the integration, which we plan to complete by July 2018. 3-K for All will ultimately be the largest program of its kind in the nation, and will begin in the upcoming school year with the creation of three-year-old preschool seats in School District 7 in the South Bronx and School District 23 in Brownsville, Brooklyn. ACS is working with our EarlyLearn Providers, many of whom already partner with the DOE to provide Pre-K for All, to transition them to DOE. Teachers of three-year-olds at EarlyLearn sites will begin to receive additional support from DOE Instructional Coordinators and Social Workers. Today, these individuals focus on quality standards in four-year-old classrooms; as the transition progresses, that support will begin extending to EarlyLearn three-year-old classrooms. ACS and DOE will also work with the Mayor's Office of Labor Relations, the Day Care Council of New York, and DC 1707 Locals 95 and 205, which represent EarlyLearn center-based teachers, to help support teachers and other employees.

As EarlyLearn NYC transfers to DOE, ACS will continue to administer the City's child care voucher system. We will continue our efforts to bolster the quality of care in this system, which serves 29,000 children under the age of 5, in collaboration with the Human Resources Administration (HRA), the Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and DOE.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss ACS' work this afternoon. I am honored to serve the children and families of our city as ACS' Commissioner and am humbled every day by the extraordinary dedication of the thousands of women and men at ACS and our provider agencies, and by the resilience and strength of the children and families we serve. I consider it my charge to help our agency move beyond a difficult period of transition and reform, and forward to a future of innovation and accomplishment. I also want to express my gratitude to the Council for your leadership and for your steadfast support for our efforts to make sure our children and families are safe and can thrive. I look forward to our continued partnership in these efforts. I am happy to answer your questions.