



**Testimony Before the New York City Council Committee on Youth Services  
Regarding the Department of Youth and Community Development's  
Preliminary Budget  
March 5, 2008**

Statement of Rebecca Brown, Deputy Director  
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Good afternoon Chairman Fidler and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and discuss the city's youth development, training and employment programs, as well as adult literacy and English language services supported by DYCD.

My name is Rebecca Brown and I am Deputy Director of the NYC Employment and Training Coalition (NYCETC). NYCETC is an association of over 200 community-based organizations, community colleges, labor unions and educational entities that provide education, training, employment and youth development services to over 600,000 New Yorkers annually. A full 40% of our members serve young adults. These include either youth who are in-school and need additional support to graduate and become work ready; or youth who are disconnected from both school and the workforce. The Coalition envisions a city where every resident has opportunities and access to gain the skills they need to become employable, and every business can attract and retain highly skilled workers.

I would first like to thank the Council for its financial support of youth development, training, employment and literacy programs over the past several years. That investment has been critical to supporting the important work of our member community-based organizations.

Today I will focus my comments on the essential need for sustained investment in the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP), as well as Adult Literacy, Family Literacy and English Language Services, in order to keep our workforce skilled and our economy competitive.

Everyday, thousands of youth development, training and employment professionals in hundreds of public and private organizations change lives by giving young people the tools, connections and preparation they need to achieve economic opportunity and stability. These organizations are part of the city's workforce development system, which works with city agencies like the Department of Youth and Community Development, Department of Education and others, to prepare young people for high-demand jobs.

Ours is a unique system, unlike any other in the nation. It is a true public-private partnership that relies on public agencies working together with community-based organizations, community colleges, unions and for-profit companies to provide a full range of education, training, employment and youth development services in all parts of the city. While other cities rely on similar partnerships, no one does it at the scale of New York City. We are the largest municipal workforce development system in the country and larger than many states.

Our mission -- to keep the city competitive in the national and global economy -- depends upon our ability to meet the needs of the city's employers by making sure that New Yorkers have the right skills to access jobs. The success of this mission is fundamental to New York's economic development. Youth development *is* economic development and our investment in New York City's human capital should be just as critical as public investments in infrastructure or large real estate projects.

However, for whatever reason, necessary investment in human capital has not been sustained, particularly at the federal level. In his FY09 budget request released last month, President Bush proposed an \$83 million cut in Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth Activities dollars. These cuts come on top of the already 40% decrease in federal workforce funding over the last 20 years.

Investments are fundamental to keeping the workforce system and economy going, especially as multiple indicators continue to point toward challenging economic times ahead. The threat of additional job layoffs and home foreclosures behooves us to make sure that we have well-supported youth development, training, employment and literacy programs in place to prepare our current, as well as emerging, workforce for employers' hiring needs. And, though the budget debates in Washington and here in the city have only just begun, now is not the time to be *de-investing* in New York City's young adults.

For this reason, the City Council's investments in youth development, training, internship, employment and literacy initiatives during the last few years, including funding for several Center for Economic Opportunity programs, have been critical to helping thousands of young people prepare for jobs, secure jobs and/or further their education in these challenging economic times. These investments are providing resources to community-based organizations that are helping businesses to meet their hiring needs in order to keep New York City competitive. Even in the face of budget challenges, we urge you to continue this investment.

Speaking of competitiveness, the NYS Department of Labor projects that nearly half (47%) of the jobs in New York today, and during the next 7 years, will be "middle skill" jobs -- jobs that require *more* than a high school diploma, but *less* than a bachelor's degree. Many of these are in such key industries as health care, hospitality management, construction, transportation and others. So, it is important that New York enable its young people to obtain the education, training and work experience needed to fill these positions in order to keep the economy moving forward.

Mayor Bloomberg's Preliminary FY09 Budget proposes a \$3.15 million cut in Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) funding, which would result in about 2,100 fewer jobs

for young people. SYEP connects youth with real work opportunities and prepares them for careers. Programs like SYEP, YAIP, Adult Literacy, Family Literacy and English Language Services are *critical* to helping New York City fill these essential “middle skill” jobs that I just mentioned. We ask that the Council work with the Mayor to *restore* funding for SYEP, as well as *preserve* funding for these other programs.

As an association of training providers who work daily to prepare youth and adults for New York’s high-demand occupations, NYCETC sees firsthand the skills and talent employers need to be competitive. We hope that the City Council will take our unique perspective into account as it works to make critical budgetary decisions.

Through the Council’s leadership and continued investment in these programs, New York City can prepare a workforce that meets employers’ needs of today and tomorrow. Our economic competitiveness depends on it!

We look forward to working with the City Council, city agencies, the Youth Council and our member agencies further to build a strong workforce development system that continues to change the lives of young people on a daily basis. Thank you.