

Delivered to: New York City Council Subcommittee on Early Childhood Education, Committee on Workforce Development, and Committee on Higher Education

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Early Childhood Educator Workforce Development and Pipeline

Thank you to Chairs Gutiérrez, Joseph, and Won and the members of the subcommittee and committees for the opportunity to give testimony today. My name is Dona Anderson and I am executive director of the New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute (PDI), a public-private partnership at CUNY. I also lead the CUNY Office of Early Childhood Initiatives, working closely with CUNY Central colleagues and our 17 campus child care centers to strengthen the early childhood workforce and expand access to high-quality child care and education for CUNY student-parents.

We appreciate the City Council's focus on early educator workforce development. It is important to recognize that well-prepared educators are the key to providing high-quality, responsive care and education to New York City's youngest learners. CUNY has been a strong partner in these efforts, and we look forward to continuing this work to realize the bold vision of universal child care in our city and state.

The early childhood care and education workforce landscape is complex, with differing licensing and funding requirements depending on the age of children, the location, and the program modality. There are multiple entry points for new early care and education (ECE) professionals, and many pathways for those looking to advance within the field. Our institute exists to address this complexity. We take a holistic approach to serving the ECE workforce, recognizing that services and supports are needed in conjunction with college-level educator preparation programs.

The City's ECE workforce is made up primarily of women, and primarily women of color. They communicate with families in at least 31 different languages and have education levels that vary from high school diplomas to PhDs. The work of building the brain architecture of our littlest learners is essential to what they do. It is sophisticated, challenging and inspiring work, requiring high levels of skill, competencies, and knowledge to provide the best outcomes for children and families.

CUNY PDI supports the early care and education workforce in many ways. We operate the Aspire Registry, the state's most comprehensive source of verified data about the ECE workforce. More than 66% of licensed child care centers along with 26,000 professionals and almost 2,000 trainers already participate in the Registry. Its data indicates that there are about 3,800 home-based providers in the city who do not have a Child Development

Associate (CDA) credential or higher level of education, and that only about 1 in 4 lead teachers in licensed centers hold teacher certification. The Registry also allows professionals to find and access high quality training opportunities, including coaching.

We are also the implementing agency for QUALITYstarsNY, the state's quality rating and improvement system, which in the last four years has invested \$4.8 million in the city alone to create high quality learning environments, and also provided training scholarships for nearly 7,000 staff and professionals.

I want to especially highlight today the work that we do through our NYC Career Development Center. We have 10 Centers across the state that provide career and academic advising, employment services, and professional learning to over 6,000 people every year, almost 3,000 of whom are in NYC. The Center provides free, individualized academic planning and career guidance to early childhood professionals and its employment network offers hiring, job matching, and employment supports to both job seekers and ECE employers. The Center's Early Childhood Leadership Initiative offers leadership development and networking opportunities for directors, administrators, and family child care providers.

We also work with CUNY campuses on ECE academic programs. We've teamed with the CUNY School of Professional Studies (SPS) to create a credit-bearing CDA certificate program in both English and Spanish and this January launched a new master's degree program in early childhood policy and leadership. These programs are designed to meet the unique needs of New York's diverse early childhood workforce, so early childhood professionals can continue to work while pursuing their education.

Our most recent recruitment initiative is the Early Childhood Apprenticeship, a pilot program that drew 400 applicants for 30 spots. Participants are employed as assistant teacher apprentices while attending CUNY SPS. By the end of the apprenticeship, they will have earned their CDA credential, 12 college credits and a wage increase from their employers. This work was funded through a combination of private philanthropy and the Mayor's Office of Talent and Workforce Development.

On a final note, a critical factor in our work is that early care and education professionals are among the lowest paid employees in New York City. The goal of universal child care gives New York a unique opportunity to make a fundamental and much-needed investment in the early childhood workforce and ensure that it is a sustainable support for families and a viable profession for years to come. Working with ECE stakeholders across the city and state, CUNY PDI has developed a comprehensive career ladder and equitable salary scale to address this challenge and grow the workforce needed for a universal, high-quality, accessible child care system.

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We commend the City Council's attention to this workforce, and especially your understanding of the complexity of the issue in bringing together these three committees. We look forward to supporting the city's work as it continues along the pathway to universal child care.