



New York City Council Finance Committee Oversight Hearing on the Budget Plan December 11, 2023

To: The Honorable City Councilman Justin Brannan

From: Elisha Rhodes, Executive Director, Center for Racial Justice in Education

Date: December 11, 2023

Dear Councilman Brannan,

For over 20 years, we at the Center for Racial Justice in Education (CRJE) have worked alongside educators and students to dismantle patterns of racism and injustice in their schools and communities. Since 2021 alone, CRJE has guided over 7,000 educators and leaders in deepening their understanding of race, racism, and the impact of racial bias—including their own unconscious biases—on youth. Grounded in our mission to train and empower educators to dismantle patterns of racism and injustice in our schools and communities, we envision a world where all young people learn and thrive in racially equitable, liberating, and empowering educational spaces.

On behalf of the thousands of educators we partner with across New York City, we would first like to ask: Why 15? And why are we not being consulted and informed about where programming and services will be cut?

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November, with devastating rippling effects on the communities they serve. These cuts disproportionately affect low-income communities of color who rely the most on these services.

We are particularly concerned about the cuts to racial equity initiatives, afterschool programs, and youth services. In the wake of the pandemic, racial inequalities in education that have persisted for decades have deepened. The proposed budget cuts will only further exacerbate these disparities. School districts with the highest percentages of students of color, who have historically had the lowest per-pupil expenditures, have seen their expenditures [decline at a faster rate](#) than other school districts. Asian-American and White students are almost twice as likely as their Black and Hispanic peers to earn grades of “proficient” in ELA in grades 3–8; [the gap](#) is even greater in math. Persistent segregation in New York City Public schools has maintained racial isolation for students of color. Despite the racial diversity of the city’s school-aged population, [73% of middle schools](#) have a single race in the majority. Students with the highest needs are concentrated in [districts with the fewest resources](#). Black and Brown students are in urgent need of academic and social-emotional support. Teacher turnover has increased drastically, especially for Brown and Black teachers. Schools are in dire need of resources to support their Black and Brown students and to support teachers in remaining in the profession.



Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. That's why the Center for Racial Justice in Education joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and wellbeing of New York City.

We ask that the City:

- Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary
- Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits

Thank you for your consideration.

In solidarity,

Elisha Rhodes
Executive Director
Center for Racial Justice in Education