



**Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Finance**

**Re: Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget**

**May 25, 2021**

Good afternoon. I am Maggie Moroff, the Coordinator of the ARISE Coalition. ARISE is a group of more than 100 organizational and individual members who have been working together for the past 13 years to advocate for improved daily experiences and long-term outcomes for New York City's students with disabilities. I am also the Senior Special Education Policy Coordinator at Advocates for Children of New York. I am here today, however, speaking on behalf of ARISE about the need to dedicate funds in FY 2022 for evidence-based literacy supports for all students, compensatory services for students with disabilities, and appropriate specialized placements for preschool students with disabilities who require them. With the DOE receiving historic levels of federal and state funding to help address the educational disruption and trauma students have experienced this past year and a half, this budget offers an opportunity rarely seen to support NYC students, including students with disabilities.

**Literacy supports for all students** – When school staff have access to evidence-based and culturally-relevant reading curricula, and when they themselves have been trained and continue to be supported in the use of those curricula, most of their students, including those with disabilities, can learn to read. Some of those students may require additional, targeted small-group or 1:1 intervention, but the science is clear – they can become readers and literacy, as we all know, opens so many doors otherwise closed. Unfortunately, there are too many students across the City who aren't receiving the reading instruction and intervention they need. In fact, less than half of third through eighth graders, and only 36% of Black and Hispanic students and 16% of students with disabilities in grades 3–8, were reading proficiently in 2019. The Mayor's budget proposal has \$500 million in FY 22 for academic recovery and student supports, with no specifics about how this money will be used. The City should ensure that the final budget dedicates at least **\$50 million for evidence-based, culturally responsive literacy curricula**, as recommended in the City Council's preliminary budget response, so that teachers have the materials they need to teach students effectively and at least **\$150 million to provide targeted one-on-one or small-group reading intervention** to students who need more help learning to read from staff who have training in evidence-based approaches.

**Compensatory services** – While we recognize all the work done by the DOE and by those directly supporting students with disabilities this past year, there is no doubt that too many students with IEPs, disproportionately Black, Latinx, and from lower income families, have gone without the critical instruction and special education supports they require to make progress. The DOE must be prepared to provide compensatory services to make up for those lost hours and experiences. The Executive Budget includes \$236 million in FY 22 for special education services, including compensatory services, but the DOE has not announced a plan for how they will provide these services, making it difficult to assess this funding level. The City must make public their plan for how they'll determine which students require compensatory special education supports and services, which services students will receive to address all the critical time, support and instruction they haven't received since March of 2020, and how they'll implement those services. There must be **sufficient funds in the FY 2022 budget to ensure all students with disabilities can receive the make-up instruction and services to which they are entitled** without having to file administrative hearings.

**Preschool special education** – Every preschool-aged child who needs a seat in a special education class must have access to those placements. There's currently a significant shortage driven, in part, by the difficulty community-based organizations are having hiring and retaining teachers for preschool special education classes because these teachers were not included in the City's early childhood salary parity agreement. While we appreciate that the Executive Budget includes increased funding for preschool special education, none of the \$22M for FY 22 will go to help children with the most intensive needs who require preschool special education classes – and there's no commitment to salary parity for preschool special education teachers, even after FY 22. We urge you to ensure that the final budget includes at least **\$85 million** for FY 22, as recommended by the City Council, **to ensure a preschool special education class seat for every child who needs one and provide salary parity to their teachers.**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.