



BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT VANESSA L. GIBSON

December 1, 2023

David Banks, Chancellor
New York City Public Schools
52 Chambers St.
New York NY, 10007

Dear Chancellor Banks,

As our city faces serious budget shortfalls over the coming months and years, I am writing to express my concerns with the potential for funding cuts to education programs that would devastate our young people, particularly those who have the greatest needs. These proposed budget cuts, which amount to nearly \$550 million for fiscal year 2024 and over \$600 million for fiscal year 2025, will have a disastrous effect on our school system's ability to educate our youth and provide necessary support to historically neglected communities through school programming that caters to our city's most vulnerable populations. For this reason, I strongly encourage you to do everything in your power to maintain continuity of services when administering these budget reductions.

The Bronx has suffered from historical neglect and underinvestment by our institutions, the legacy of which is still felt by students today. Eighty-eight percent of Bronx students are economically disadvantaged, and 13 percent are homeless. The graduation rate was less than 80 percent in 2022, the lowest among the boroughs. Despite this, we have seen the graduation rate rise in recent years due to the hard work of our students, educators, and administrators. Drastic cuts to the schools' budgets threaten to undo years of progress.

As Borough President and a former member of the City Council, I have strongly advocated for numerous programs through the NYC Public Schools, DYCD, and other agencies to improve the ability of our young people to access programs and opportunities that will help them reach their potentials. As a Council Member, I supported the expansion of Community Schools and fought for Bridging the Gap social workers in the city budget. When budget cuts were considered in the past, I joined my colleagues on the Council to push back against them to ensure that our schools were able to get the funding they needed. As Borough President, I have also worked with early childcare providers and been a strong supporter of Pre-K programs – many which are owned and operated by women and women of color who live in the communities they serve.

These budget reductions will include cuts to programs including Community Schools, Computer Science for All, Early Childhood, D75, and Summer Rising. These programs are invaluable in our efforts to ensure that all our children have access to a robust education. They are essential tools for leveling the playing field and giving all of our young people the ability to grow and thrive. These cuts will also cause a six-month delay in the opening of new 3K and Pre-K programs in The Bronx and on Staten Island. Working class families need these services and cannot afford to wait.

I am also concerned by potential cuts to the School Safety division. The number of weapons confiscated in schools this year has increased, and the loss of a new class of 250 School Safety agents will have a serious impact on the safety of our students. There are already far fewer School Safety agents in our city than there were before the pandemic – over 1,000 fewer since 2019 – and abruptly canceling this new cohort will make the situation worse. It is also wholly unfair to the recruits who were about to start their training, many of whom left other jobs to help support our youth in our schools.

Our city has a moral commitment and obligation to our children. We must do all we can to ensure they have the opportunity to learn and thrive, and that means exploring creative solutions to reduce costs and increase investment. Everyone in our Bronx public schools, from the superintendents and principals to the teachers and support staff, have done their utmost to honor this commitment. DOE must do all it can to ensure that we do not undo the progress that has been made to support our most vulnerable youth.

Sincerely,



Vanessa L. Gibson
Bronx Borough President

CC: Hon. Eric Adams, Mayor of New York
Hon. Adrienne Adams, Speaker of the City Council
Hon. Justin Brannan, Chair of the City Council Finance Committee
Hon. Rita Joseph, Chair of the City Council Education Committee
Camille Joseph-Varlack, Chief of Staff
Jacques Jiha, Director of OMB

Hon. Diana Ayala, Council Member, District 8
Hon. Eric Dinowitz, Council Member, District 11
Hon. Kevin C. Riley, Council Member, District 12
Hon. Marjorie Velázquez, Council Member, District 13
Hon. Pierina Sanchez, Council Member, District 14
Hon. Oswald Feliz, Council Member, District 15
Hon. Althea Stevens, Council Member, District 16
Hon. Rafael Salamanca Jr., Council Member, District 17
Hon. Amanda Farías, Council Member, District 18