



THE COUNCIL OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

ADRIENNE ADAMS
SPEAKER

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July 12, 2022

Mayor Eric Adams
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Chancellor David C. Banks
New York City Department of Education
Tweed Courthouse
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks:

As follow-up to our many conversations and meetings, we write to express our opposition and disappointment with how the Department of Education is administering individual school budgets. DOE's return to long-standing, dysfunctional and bureaucratic policies that negatively impact schools is counterproductive. Principals, schools, and teachers must make important decisions within the next month, and your continued inaction is hampering their ability to make the right choices for students. We urge you to immediately restore school budgets to prevent the elimination of key programs and teachers at schools for the upcoming year.

Our communities and young people are reeling from the effects of the pandemic. DOE's significant reductions to school budgets will hurt those with the greatest needs – Black and brown students, those from low-income communities and families, students with disabilities, and English language learners. The [reports](#) of DOE removing funding from individual schools, unrelated to the city budget, is further evidence of its harmful policies. That is why those of us who voted in the majority to approve the budget and those of us who did not are united in demanding you urgently resolve these problems with school budgets. We must close the immediate gap faced by our schools, while working to address the systemic problems with DOE's school budget policies.

Declining federal stimulus funds cannot be an excuse for bad policy decisions, and the funds exist within DOE's \$37.6 billion budget to support schools. As of June 7, the Independent Budget Office tracker identified \$761 million in unspent federal stimulus funds for Fiscal Year 2022 and \$38.1 million from Fiscal Year 2021 within the agency's budget (the Comptroller's Office identified at least \$620 million in unspent ARPA and CRRSSA Education funds). These are funds that must be used for school budgets, consistent with [President Biden's recent call for school systems across the U.S.](#) to

“leverage these funds to expand programming and services to help students make up for lost learning time and succeed.” We are demanding that DOE restore school budgets now before teachers must make final decisions on placements and are permanently separated from their schools.

DOE has indicated a gap in school budgets of approximately \$215 million, barely 0.06% of the agency’s \$37.6 billion budget. Despite differing amounts of funding being reported as cut from schools by DOE, indicating even greater reductions and the policy-driven nature of school budgets, the solution remains the same¹. DOE’s numbers are not adding up, and it seems to be using the city budget as a smokescreen to evade responsibility for its policies that undermine support for schools.

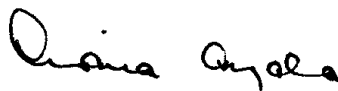
We must confront the DOE’s status quo policies on school budgets that poorly serve schools and students. Agency representatives recently testified that these policies and processes are inefficient. By underestimating enrollment in initial budgets that typically get adjusted over the course of the year, the DOE disrupts sensible school budget planning. Schools should not be required to go through an appeal process to get the resources they need. We request DOE commit to a formal process with school stakeholders, including the Council, that leads to concrete changes to school budget policies and the funding formula by next fiscal year’s city budget and school budgets.

Your refusal to work towards resolution of these issues within the budget process has made them continuing items to address. The DOE’s school budget policies are disrupting school communities in every borough, and we cannot afford for them to continue. The response we have received from you thus far – to wait until the school year to address this issue – is unacceptable, because it will be too late to avoid the negative impact on students. We are demanding that you restore the funds ahead of the looming major decisions within the month that allow schools to adequately and fairly plan for the school year. We look forward to your expedited action that permits us all to work towards adequately supporting our students. Please send any questions to the Council’s Director of Oversight and Investigations, Aaron Mendelsohn, at amendelsohn@council.nyc.gov or (212) 482-4240.

Sincerely,



Adrienne E. Adams
Speaker



Diana Ayala
Deputy Speaker



Keith Powers
Majority Leader



Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
Majority Whip



Justin Brannan
Council Member



Gale A. Brewer
Council Member

¹ The Office of the NYC Comptroller has compared the initial Fiscal Year 2022 school allocations to the initial Fiscal Year 2023 FSF allocations and indicated a "net reduction of \$489 million between the two years." The Comptroller's Office has also stated that "1,166 schools lost a total of \$469 million."



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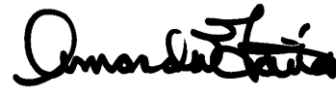
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