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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Joint Meeting of the Women & Families and Youth, Education and Libraries Committees
January 25, 2023 at 6:30 pm
This meeting was conducted via Zoom

MINUTES

CB8 Members in Attendance: Vanessa Aronson, Gayle Baron, Taina Borrero, Saundra Coleman, Rebecca Dangoor, Ed Hartzog, Sahar Husain, Addeson Lehv, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Barbara Rudder, Russell Squire

Public Member in Attendance: Susan Evans

1. Finding Childcare in NYC and Beyond

Childcare services remain out of reach for many parents in New York City and nationwide. But the City is taking steps to correct this pressing concern.

In New York City, childcare services are inadequate, and costs can be prohibitive, meeting participants said. Those were some of the messages of speakers at the January joint meeting of the Women & Families and Youth, Education and Libraries committees. Speakers included City Council Member Julie Menin; Tara Gardner, executive director of the Day Care Council of New York and Samuel Stephens, consultant, early childhood education and development.

According to meeting participants, childcare services in New York City are inadequate, and costs can be prohibitive. According to government data, American should spend no more than 7% of their household income on childcare. But in Manhattan, government data show infant care at a day care center consumed an average one fifth, or fully 20.1%, of a family's income in 2018. By comparison, home-based care for infants ate up 9.8% of a family's earnings on average. In the Bronx, day care center costs for an infant averaged a whopping 47% of a family's income during the same time period.

Today, New York City has more than 2,850 day care centers that are privately and publicly funded and more than 11,500 family childcare and group family childcare providers—also publicly and privately funded-- who offer services in their homes. There also are more than 1,600 school age care providers offering before-school and after-school programming and services. All these providers are licensed and registered with the New York City Health Dept., the DCCNY's Tara Gardner reported.

However, demand for day care is outpacing supply. As one illustration, an Upper East Side resident, speaking during the meeting's Q&A session, reported that he and his wife recently searched for months to find childcare for their infant. At eight centers, the family was put on a waiting list, each application costing \$100. Eventually, the family found (an unnamed) center, which cost them \$3,000 a month.

Although the Upper East Sider said he can afford that hefty price, he cited the dearth of information on how to find childcare services.

Evidently, many other parents have difficulty finding and/or affording quality, accessible childcare.

In his presentation, Dr. Stephens cited a government report stating: “With reasonable effort, all families can find and use affordable care that meets the family’s needs and supports their children’s development.”

But evidently, there are significant hurdles to overcome. Some of the issues and obstacles:

“Paid care can be very expensive,” Dr. Stephens noted. Nationally, about 60% of low-income families don’t pay for care, since they use informal services, such as family and friends. The remaining 40% who use paid care spend about 35% of their income on care. Even middle-income families earning 200%-to-400% above the federal poverty line pay an average 14% of their income on childcare, Dr. Stephens reported.

For low-income parents there’s an additional headache: These parents typically have less flexible work hours and/or less traditional 9-to-5 work hours than those in higher-paying jobs. Thus, they may find it even harder to locate childcare that fits a non-traditional work schedule. And, without spousal help, single parents may struggle to find childcare that covers any non-traditional hours they work.

According to Dr. Stephens, the specific care families need often depends on their children’s age. When their child is younger than three, many parents prefer home-based childcare to accommodate parents’ work or education schedules. Later, for children aged three-to-six, parents often opt for center-based care, to provide children with pre-academic or emotional development or cultural diversification. Thus, searching for care can involve one, two or, with multiple children, multiple searches. “It’s not a one-and-done” process, Dr. Stephens said.

Through the Childcare Council of New York, parents can receive information about childcare and referrals to care providers, Ms. Gardner of CCCNY reported. The Council also provides services, support and technical assistance to childcare providers. In addition, the Council works to build and sustain a pipeline of people entering the childcare sector and advocates for increasing seats for infants and toddlers and expanding the number of year-round care programs.

Today, fully 66% of NYC’s care programs are school-day, school-year models, which provide six hours and twenty minutes of care per day during the school year. This can be a problem for the many parents who work longer than six hours. However, some 30% of programs are year-round and run for about 10 hours per day.

In terms of referrals, parents receive a minimum of three, but typically many more, names of service providers, Ms. Gardner said. Providers on the CCCNY’s list come from an NYC database. The Council makes referrals to services on the basis of such factors as where the parents want the care service, what kind of childcare parents want, where the parents work, the parents’ zip code, their community board, and their borough. Although parents follow up on their own with providers, parents receive a packet of information, including questions to ask providers, to help choosing a service.

The phone number for the CCCNY’s referral service is: 800-469-5999.

To assist with the cost of care, vouchers and other subsidies are available to qualified parents. In August 2022, New York State raised the eligibility for childcare assistance to families. Now, for example, a family of four annually earning \$83,250 or less can qualify for assistance.

On November 9, 2022, NYC Mayor Eric Adams signed a package of seven bills into law which provide support for mothers, working parents, caregivers and families. Councilmember Julie Menin who sponsored five of the bills began her remarks by explaining that NYC is the first in the country to implement universal childcare. Sadly, over 375,000 parents have been pushed out of the workforce or downshifted their jobs over the past few years because they had no other way to take care of their children. Councilmember Menin, a mother of four, explained that struggling to balance childcare and the needs of providing for a family is something no parent should have to go through. She then gave a breakdown of her bills:

Intro. 485A charges the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in coordination with the NYC Office of Technology and Innovation to create and maintain an online website with a directory of childcare programs to assist parents in finding the right childcare fit and location for their children.

Intro. 486A establishes a childcare advisory board to conduct studies on and issue reports related to childcare in the City.

Intro. 487A requires an agency or office designated by the Mayor, in collaboration with the NYC Office of Technology and Innovation, to create and maintain a publicly accessible online portal regarding childcare subsidies.

Intro. 488A calls for an administrative agency designated by the Mayor to establish a three year childcare grant pilot program by July 1, 2023.

Intro. 489A charges the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to develop guidance for owners of real property regarding facility requirements for childcare programs and to make this guidance available on its website,

In addition to Councilmember Menin's bills, two others were also signed into law:

Intro 242A sponsored by NYC Councilmember Jennifer Gutierrez would require the creation of a Marshall Plan for Moms Task Force to study and develop recommendations to support working mothers, parents and caregivers.

Intro 477A sponsored by NYC Councilmember Crystal Hudson establishes a childcare task force to study how to make childcare more affordable and accessible for NYC families and would outline how to provide support and funding for childcare.

Councilmember Menin concluded her remarks by explaining that we are now moving towards providing the support of an entire city to help families meet their childcare needs.

P. Gayle Baron and Margaret Price, Co-Chairs