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**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses  
Before the New York City Council  
Committee on General Welfare  
Honorable Annabel Palma, Chair  
On Poverty Trends in New York City**

**Presented by Gregory Brender, Policy Analyst**

**December 12, 2011**

Thank you Chair Palma and members of the General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to present testimony and for convening this hearing. My name is Gregory Brender and I am here on behalf of United Neighborhood Houses. United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is the membership organization of New York City settlement houses and community centers. Rooted in the history and values of the settlement house movement, UNH promotes and strengthens the neighborhood-based, multi-service approach to improving the lives of New Yorkers in need and the communities in which they live. UNH's membership comprises one of the largest human service systems in New York City, with 37 agencies working at more than 400 sites to provide high quality services and activities to half million New Yorkers each year. UNH supports its members through policy development, advocacy and capacity-building activities.

We are glad to see that the City's Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) has found that policies intended to bolster family income have succeeded in preventing a rise in poverty. We know that the services our member agencies provide, including early childhood education, after school programs, summer jobs for teenagers, adult literacy and senior services are critical in helping, struggling families.

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I have met with many parents of children who are in the child care and after school programs run by our member agencies. In this tight economy, where many parents are looking for work, some of them are working two or three jobs to make ends meet. What I have heard time and time again, is that there is “no plan b.” If parents do not have somewhere safe for their children during the day and after school, they cannot keep working. Services for seniors similarly help working families by providing care and places to go for older family members when relatives are at work or at school.

It is therefore distressing that the funding streams which support struggling families are in danger.

For example, The City’s publicly- funded after-school program, Out-of-School Time (OST), will have 23,000 fewer seats for elementary and middle school children next year. We were disturbed when we learned that Mayor Bloomberg’s November Budget Plan outlines a reduction to after-school programs by an additional 3,000 children on top of the already announced 20,000. This reduction would affect fewer available seats for elementary and middle school children next year as a result of prior cuts to the budget of the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD).

In early childhood education, nearly 10,000 slots will be lost by the time the ACS Early Learn RFP is implemented next fall. 7,000 of these slots are at risk because the Mayor has not yet baselined investments that the City Council made in the FY 2012 budget.

These cuts mean that more New Yorkers will be put in the impossible position of having to choose between work and supporting their families. We are glad that the CEO and others have found that there are policies and programs that are successful in combating poverty. We look forward to continuing to work with the City to help New York’s communities fight poverty.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and for convening this hearing.

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*UNH Members: Arab American Family Support Center – Broadway Housing Communities- BronxWorks - CAMBA - Center for Family Life in Sunset Park - Chinese American Planning Council - Claremont Neighborhood Centers - Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation - East Side House Settlement - Educational Alliance - Goddard Riverside Community Center - Grand Street Settlement - Greenwich House - Hamilton-Madison House - Hartley House - Henry Street Settlement - Hudson Guild - Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement House - Kingsbridge Heights Community Center - Lenox Hill Neighborhood House - Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center - Mosholu Montefiore Community - New Settlement Apartments - Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation - Project Hospitality - Queens Community House - Riverdale Neighborhood House - SCAN New York - School Settlement Association - Shorefront YM-WHA of Brighton-Manhattan Beach, Inc - Southeast Bronx Neighborhood Centers - St. Nicholas Alliance - Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center - Sunnyside Community Services - Union Settlement Association- United Community Centers - University Settlement Society*