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Testimony to the Youth Services Committee of the New York City Council
Lew Fidler, Chair

Education Committee of the New York City Council
Robert Jackson, Chair

Public Housing Committee of the New York City Council
Rosie Mendez, Chair

Joint Oversight Hearing: The impact of the Department of Education's and New York City Housing Authority's fee policies on the ability to provide services for youth.

October 29, 2010

My name is Anthony Ng, and I am the Deputy Director of Policy and Advocacy at United Neighborhood Houses of New York (UNH). I am joined by Gregory Brender, Policy Analyst at UNH. Founded in 1919, 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 39 agencies working at more than 400 sites to provide high quality services and activities to a half million New Yorkers each year. UNH supports its members through policy development, advocacy and capacity-building activities. Services provided by our members include: early childhood education, after-school programs, teen centers, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, immigration legal services, GED classes, job training, tutoring, recreation, meals and supportive services for the elderly, mental health counseling, drug prevention, and art, music and drama programs.

Thank you for holding this important hearing today. I want to echo the testimony made by our colleagues of the NYC Youth Alliance. UNH is a proud member of the Youth Alliance, and we support their testimony today. We are appearing today as UNH to offer our perspective on both issues that are being examined by this hearing. I will speak about the DOE's fee policies and my colleague Gregory Brender, will speak about NYCHA's fee policies.

DOE Fee Policies

When we first learned this Fall that DOE was charging fees to afterschool programs, there was confusion about the new policy, and providers were being given conflicting information about the proposed changes. We understand the policy as follows:

- DYCD's OST and Beacon programs are not affected.
- Fees are being charged to community based organizations (CBOs) that operate programs after 6pm in school space.

We urge the **DOE to repeal its new policy of charging fees to afterschool programs.** DOE's new policy contradicts the City's existing policy of covering school fees for DYCD's OST and Beacon programs – providers are not charged, and the costs are paid for through an intra-city transfer of funds between DOE and DYCD. If the City has a policy to cover school opening fees for OST and Beacon programs, it should continue this arrangement for other afterschool and youth programs operated by community based organizations in school space. Many providers have endured budget cuts over the past few years. Incurring new, unforeseen costs now, will further impair the ability of CBOs to provide these important programs and services to youth, families, and communities.

NYCHA Fee Policies

Over half of UNH members operate in NYCHA facilities and serve the communities that live in and near NYCHA developments. Currently, UNH members operate:

- 28 community centers which are open to all community members including 5 Cornerstone Initiative Community Centers.
- 7 after school programs for youth.
- 20 child care and Head Start programs.
- 24 Senior Centers, NORC's and other supportive programs for older adults.
- Health and mental health clinics, hobby programs, summer camps and other programs which meet the specific needs of communities in NYCHA.

We agree with NYCHA Chair John Rhea's statement that "Public Housing is more than just a home... it is a force for real and lasting good in the lives of families."¹ Human service programs, including services for youth, children, seniors and families help public housing in New York City to achieve this goal.

UNH members and other human service providers would simply not be able to provide the level of service that they do without the continued availability of free or affordable space in NYCHA developments. The services that neighborhoods and families depend upon themselves depend upon the availability of space from NYCHA. Budgets from DYCD, DFTA, ACS and other agencies do not contain sufficient funds to pay market rate for the space used to provide services to communities. NYCHA must not force non-profit providers into an unfair competition with commercial interests for the use of community space.

¹ John B Rhea. "More than Bricks and Mortar: Services that Build Strong Communities" The Settlement Summit, New York City, October 5, 2010 http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycha/downloads/pdf/Chairman_Rhea_Settlement_Summit_Address_10_5_2010.pdf

NYCHA's fee policies have already contributed to the closure of one youth program operated by a UNH member in the Bronx at Fort Independence, a NYCHA development on Bailey Avenue. NYCHA had proposed to increase rent on the youth center from \$4,000 to \$60,000 per year. Such a dramatic increase, along with the loss of funding from both private and public sources made it impossible for this UNH member to continue its program in that community.

NYCHA, like most public housing authorities nationwide, faces a structural deficit that is the result of years of underfunding from all levels of government. We have supported and advocated for increased funding for NYCHA including NYCHA's innovative federalization program that will bring much needed federal support to New York City's public housing. However, we can not afford to close NYCHA's deficit by eliminating space for services that communities need. **We urge NYCHA and the City to continue to provide free or affordable space for human service providers serving NYCHA communities.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We look forward to working with the City Council and the Mayor to best support afterschool and human service programs that operate in DOE and NYCHA facilities.

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 CommunityCenter – New Settlement Apartments -- Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation – Project Hospitality - Riverdale Neighborhood House - Queens Community House - SCAN New York - School Settlement Association - Shorefront YM-YWHA of Brighton-Manhattan Beach, Inc - Southeast Bronx Neighborhood Centers - St. Matthew's and St. Timothy's Neighborhood Center - St. Nicks Alliance - Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center - Sunnyside Community Services - Third Street Music School Settlement - Union Settlement Association - United Community Centers - University Settlement Society