

December 11, 2015

Honorable Bill de Blasio  
Mayor of New York City  
City Hall  
New York, New York 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

On behalf of the undersigned nonprofit EarlyLearn providers, we are writing to express our grave concerns about the complete lack of meaningful progress towards addressing the unreasonably low salaries and benefits being provided to the teaching and support staff in our early childhood education centers. We therefore are asking you to direct OLR and OMB to take immediate steps to resolve this issue.

The facts are clear and compelling:

- Our early childhood education employees – who are represented by DC1707 (Locals 95 and 205) and the Council of Supervisors and Administrators (Local 1) – have not had an increase in their contract salary rates since 2006, which is a period of almost 10 years.
- To our knowledge no City-funded workforce has gone as long without a pay increase.
- The salaries of these employees are 100% paid for under our City contracts, and so the City has the sole power to decide how much these employees are paid.
- Certified teachers in the public schools (who are represented by UFT) have starting salaries that are 9% to 38% higher than the starting salaries of the certified teachers in our nonprofit EarlyLearn centers.
- Certified public school teachers with 10 years of experience make 48% to 79% more than our certified teachers, and those with 20 years of experience make 82% to 115% more than our certified teachers who have the same credentials and the same experience.
- Over the course of a 20-year career, certified public school teachers will earn between \$465,000 and \$561,000 more than certified teachers in our nonprofit EarlyLearn programs.
- Our programs are open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., including on public school holidays and in July and August when the public schools are closed – which means our staff members are working longer and harder for less pay.
- Prior to 2013, the City paid for the health insurance costs of our EarlyLearn staff members through the Citywide Central Insurance Program, but in 2013 that burden was shifted to our programs and our employees. As a result, more than 50% of employees

can no longer afford health insurance, and/or have moved from family coverage to individual coverage, thereby leaving their children, spouses and partners vulnerable.

- The vast majority of the staff members in our programs are women of color, and the City has yet to articulate a non-discriminatory basis for the disparities in treatment of these employees.

Our employees are enduring tremendous hardships as a result of these unreasonable compensation levels. A recent survey indicated that:

- 61% of our employees have incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level;
- 17% of our employees receive food stamps; and
- 55% of our employees or their children receive Medicaid.

The fact that so many City-funded employees have to rely on public assistance to survive is an embarrassment to us. It should be an embarrassment to anyone.

The personal stories are even more compelling – and devastating. We have staff members who walk long distances to work because they cannot afford MetroCards; who report that towards the end of each pay period they run out of money for food; and who can't keep up with their rent and end up temporarily homeless.

It is ironic – and shameful – that the City urges us to prioritize care for children in homeless shelters, and yet refuses to grant the funding necessary to keep our own employees out of those very same shelters.

Despite the clear and convincing evidence of inequitable treatment, there has been no meaningful progress in contract negotiations with the City (which are conducted through the Day Care Council of New York, the Head Start Sponsoring Board Council of New York, CSA and DC1707).

This issue has reached a crisis stage. Our certified teachers are flocking to the public schools, where they get higher pay, less expensive health care coverage, shorter teaching hours, and summers off. As a result, the most vulnerable children in the highest-need communities end up with the lowest-paid and least experienced teachers – which is exactly the opposite of the result we should be trying to achieve.

The solution is simple – provide sufficient funding to allow the EarlyLearn contractors to negotiate a fair contract with DC1707 and CSA. That contract must, at a minimum, provide the following:

1. a lump sum retroactive payment for lost wages;
2. salaries and benefits on par with those of similarly-situated public school employees, including step increases based on tenure; and
3. full funding for employee health insurance.

Your first two years in office have been highlighted by two signature initiatives – addressing income inequality and enhancing early childhood education – but the current EarlyLearn staff salaries flies in the face of both of those initiatives.

Every day, our underpaid staff members educate tens of thousands of 2, 3 and 4 year old children, the vast majority of whom are children of color living in low-income communities. Our work creates the

foundation for these children to embark on a lifetime of learning, but the stark reality is that we will never have a high quality educational system if we fail to pay adequate salaries to those teaching the youngest and most vulnerable children. The low pay scale prevents us from attracting the best teachers, increases staff turnover, creates low employee morale, and as a consequence harms the children we are all dedicated to serve.

Educating young children is our highest priority. Please show us that it is yours as well.

Thank you for your leadership. We look forward to hearing from you.

Very truly yours,

Angela Ariza  
Executive Director  
Bellevue Day Care Center, Inc.

Jo-Ann Whitehead  
Board President  
Blanche CPDCC.

José Velilla  
Executive Director  
The Bloomingdale Family Program

Thomas Howard, Jr., Ed.D.  
Executive Director  
Boys & Girls Harbor

Susan Lovegrove, MSE  
Director  
Breukelen Early Childhood Development Center

Angela Sinapi  
Director  
Bronx River Early Learn Center

Eileen Torres  
Executive Director  
BronxWorks

James Matison  
Executive Director  
Brooklyn Kindergarten Society

Samuel C. Robinson III  
Director  
Citizens Care Day Care Center 3

Abraham Jones  
Executive Director  
Claremont Neighborhood Centers

Alice B. Owens  
President  
Colony-South Brooklyn House, Inc.

Mojisola Bafunso  
Executive Director  
Committee for Early Childhood Development

Wendy Gelabert  
Education/Child Care Director  
Concourse House Day Center

Maria Contreras Collier  
Executive Director  
Cypress Hills Child Care Corporation

Simone F. Alleyne  
Site Director  
Early LIFE Marcus Garvey #8

George Penaherrera  
Director  
East Calvary Day Care Center

Kelly Haley  
Interim Administrative Director  
East Harlem Block Nursery, Inc.

John A. Sanchez  
Executive Director  
East Side House Settlement

R. Sally Maldonado  
Director  
Eisman Day Nursery

Vaughan Toney  
President/CEO  
Friends of Crown Heights

Stephan Russo  
Executive Director  
Goddard Riverside Community Center

Robert Cordero  
Executive Director  
Grand Street Settlement

Mark Handelman, LCSW, ACSW  
Executive Director  
Hamilton-Madison House

David Garza  
Executive Director  
Henry Street Settlement.

Ken Jockers  
Executive Director  
Hudson Guild

Warren Scharf  
Executive Director  
Marian Detalj  
Director of Children and Family Services  
Lenox Hill Neighborhood House

Thanh Kim Huynh  
Director  
Macedonia Child Development Center

Hope Cannady  
Director  
Malcolm X Early Childhood Education Center

Esperanza S. Eclipse  
Director  
Martin L. King Jr. Memorial DCC

Maria Fazzolari  
Deputy Director  
National Association of Family Development  
Centers

Olive M. Herry  
Administrative/ Education Director  
North Bronx, National Council of Negro  
Women CDC

Elena Reyes  
Operation Director  
Open Door Child Care Center

Asneth Council, Ph.D  
Director of Child Care & Nutrition  
Child Care Administration  
Police Athletic League

Rev. Darren M. Morton, Ed.D.  
Executive Director  
Prince Hall Colonial Park Daycare

Barbara Manners  
Executive Director  
Sharon Baptist Head Start

Gloria Ferrer  
Director  
SCAN LaGuardia Nursery

Douglas O'Dell  
Executive Director  
SCO Family of Services

Roseann Catania  
V.P. Early Childhood Services  
SIMHS-Head Start

Damyn Kelly  
Executive Director  
Southeast Bronx Neighborhood Centers

Sr. Margaret McDermott  
Executive Director  
Tolentine Zeiser Community Life Center

Melissa Johnson MS. Ed  
Executive Director  
Trabajamos Community Head Start

David Nocenti  
Executive Director  
Union Settlement Association

Ana Aguirre  
Executive Director  
United Community Centers

Marie J Milillo  
Executive Director  
Westchester Tremont Day Care Center, Inc.

Melissa Aase  
Executive Director  
University Settlement

Dr. Danielle Moss Lee  
Chief Executive Officer  
YWCA of the City of New York

cc: Public Advocate Leticia James  
Comptroller Scott Stringer  
Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito  
Deputy Mayor Richard Buery  
OMB Director Dean Fuleihan  
ACS Commissioner Gladys Carrión  
DOE Chancellor Carmen Fariña  
OLR Commissioner Robert Linn