

Antonia Ferraro Martinelli Opening Remarks Calendar Meeting 2022 11 29

Welcome to CEC15's November Calendar Meeting. I am standing in for our president and co-vice Presidents tonight. I want to welcome you all back from the Thanksgiving holiday. I hope you all had a wonderful weekend wherever you were. As the gatherings have begun and continue into January, I want to remind families that our schools have Covid tests available. It seems that middle school students have to go to the office to request them. Please take advantage of these free tests. I have a few updates to provide.

Testimony before City Council on Covid Relief Funds

On Nov. 16, I testified before the City Council on Covid relief funds. I spoke on the need to extend the deadline to use Federal Covid relief funds. I advocated for elementary after school to support students academically, socially and emotionally and help women get back to work after the pandemic. I advocated to fund schools with high populations of students in temporary housing and recently arrived migrants, and for additional Math support due to covid-related missed learning. I highlighted the needs of PS 94 and PS 124 in particular. The DOE has access to approximately 4 billion in federal funds, but there is no plan to spend it. Even amongst the funds that have been allocated to programs, little has been actually spent. For instance, of the \$12 million allocated to restorative justice programs only 5% has been spent.

Various people spoke from the DOE NYC Finance Team. They testified that they have been slow to spend the federal funds because of delayed program roll-outs, slow hiring, and supply chain issues. They do not expect the federal government to renew the funds. Any funds that are unspent year to year can be rolled over, but they all expire after the school year 2024-25. They stated that after 2025 there will be no funding for 3K. They also expressed concerns about the cost of Carter Cases and transportation, both of particular concern for students with disabilities and their families. Carter cases are expected to rise to \$1 billion, currently at approx. \$800 million.

The Comptroller's office, AQE, Advocates for Children and the UFT highlighted the lack of transparency as to where money has been spent. There is no detailed accounting of what the federal funds have been spent on. And concerns were raised that there is no correlation between need and where money has been spent. They asked whether we are tracking the impact and effectiveness of spent funds. A recommendation for dedicated initiative codes to track spending of stimulus funds was made.

Many City Council members spoke including Lincoln Restler, who was critical of what he characterized as the "botched expansion of 3K." The DOE stated there are 15,000 available 3K seats, but Restler countered that, "it's not a plan if all the seats are in the wrong places."

Division of Early Childhood- 3K Centers

Recall also that the UFT held a vote of [no confidence](#) in the leadership of the early childhood division. In their resolution they alleged that improper promises of gifts were made to CBO's in the form of school supplies and teachers were being coerced to nominate all students for G&T placement. We had a lot of people at our Chancellor's town hall raise questions about the early childhood center contracts. Ultimately, Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks committed to paying all community programs at least 75% of the value of their FY22 contracts with New York City Public Schools. In addition, they created a Rapid Response Team that will help community providers submit invoices and get paid promptly.

Update on Budget Cuts Lawsuit

Recall that in July a group of parents and teachers sued the city for passing a budget without holding a vote of the PEP and before the PEP held a hearing where families could provide feedback. The city bypassed the PEP with emergency declaration without a clear emergency, something they've done for 11 years of the past 13 years. Many city council members regretted their vote after the fact, wishing they had the opportunity to hear that feedback.

The judge decided the city must reinstate the previous year's budget until a vote of the PEP could take place. The city appealed and last week, the appellate court ruled that the city did violate the law, including their use of an emergency declaration, but said that revisiting the budget would be too disruptive. Going forward the city council cannot bypass the PEP in the budget process. The ruling is a mixed bag and activists point out that we currently are in the midst of the mid-year adjustments process and the budget could be fixed now.

The Silver Lining - No Mid-year Adjustments

In the spirit of thankfulness, I am thankful that the DOE has decided none of our schools will experience a reduction of funding or have to return funding due to mid-year adjustments this year. They are reallocating \$200 million in unused federal funds to hold our schools harmless for any mid-year enrollment losses. Schools that gained students will of course be compensated normally.

I consider this a partial win. We as parents may have half-lost this lawsuit but we collectively showed the Administration and our city council members that we are here, we care, and we are watching. I have been inspired by parent leaders' work to protest these cuts. Similarly I am inspired by what is happening in China, Iran and Ukraine. These are Davids going up against Goliaths. And while we certainly have our own Goliaths here in the US, I have to also feel gratitude for the ability to speak freely and effect change through our elected officials even if it is small, slow and incremental.

ReDistricting and Midterm Elections

Since our last CEC meeting we had mid- term elections in newly drawn districts, so we are represented by a few new folks. I have been working to reach out to all the newly elected officials as they organize their offices. Some of these new faces include Congressman Dan Goldman, Senator Iwen Chen and State Senator Gounardes.