

Advocacy groups calls for equal pay for early childhood educators ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Program directors and advocates from more than 100 education-based programs in the five boroughs want equal pay for early childhood educators now.

In a letter addressed to New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, the group Campaign for Children—a partnership between the Emergency Coalition to Save Children Care and the New York City Youth Alliance—the group states that community-based organizations contracted with the Administration for Children's Services are struggling to stay afloat. The letter states that these workers haven't had a raise in a decade and make less than Department of Education preschool teachers in public schools.

"The inequalities in compensation often mean the difference between living in poverty or not, and many staff in EarlyLearn programs depend on food stamps, Medicaid and other government programs to fill the gaps caused by inadequate wages," states the letter. "Assistant teachers and other support staff currently work for significantly lower wages than the \$15 per hour guidelines established for the fast-food industry. We ask that your administration immediately move forward to ensure adequate and fair compensation comprehensively throughout the early childhood education system, including for those staff serving children younger than 4 years old."

Campaign for Children officials say that low salaries mean that they struggle to attract top-tier talent to educate children in the low-income communities they mostly serve.

"All children in New York City deserve access to a high-quality early education—and in order to provide that level of quality, programs must be able to attract, retain and fairly compensate excellent teachers and staff," said Gregory Brender, co-director of policy and advocacy at United Neighborhood Houses and a member of the Campaign for Children, in a statement. "Addressing salary parity is crucial to strengthening our city's early childhood education system."

Non-DOE preschool teachers haven't had a raise since 2006.

"What people don't realize is that teachers, especially ones like me who teach 2- to 18-month-olds, are the foundation for children's learning," said Nadia Alexander, a 42-year-old head teacher in Brooklyn, in a statement. "We don't have a general job description since we do everything that needs to be done to ensure each child grows into their full potential. Our pay should reflect that importance."

The letter offered the mayor and City Hall a few suggestions on how to improve things.

"Your administration made meaningful progress settling the vast majority of the expired labor contracts you inherited on taking office. However, unionized staff in EarlyLearn programs are currently working without a contract and have not had a contract with a pay increase since 2006," the letter read. "We believe that a simple step to address this issue would be to direct the Office of Management and Budget and Office of Labor Relations to immediately proceed with negotiations and to work with both management and labor to adequately fund a contract for EarlyLearn staff."

-reprinted from Amsterdam News

Region: United States ^[3]

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