



THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
HON. MELISSA MARK-VIVERITO
SPEAKER OF THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

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NEW YORK CITY **YOUNG WOMEN'S INITIATIVE** REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS



#SHEWILLBE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May of 2015, New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, along with her colleagues, Council Members Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, Elizabeth Crowley, Laurie Cumbo and Darlene Mealy, announced the launch of the New York City Council's Young Women's Initiative (YWI).

YWI seeks to build a lasting blueprint for investing in the future of young women and girls in New York City over the long-term, especially those of color. YWI focused on the following:

- Addressing the needs of young women and girls ages 12–24, knowing that areas for intervention may reach a wider age range;
- Spotlighting issues experienced by women and girls of color, knowing that when inequity is disaggregated by race and gender, disparities in outcomes in New York City are overwhelmingly concentrated in communities of color; and
- Embracing an inclusive framework around gender beyond the binary, ensuring that transgender women and gender-non-conforming young women are also centered in this work.

Aligned with the Council's commitment to participatory governance and knowing that young women and girls are experts in their own lives, the City Council created a Young Women's Advisory Council (YWAC), which played a key role during the process.

The City Council called upon three leaders for racial and gender justice to serve as Initiative Co-Chairs: Ana Oliveira, CEO of the New York Women's Foundation; Danielle Moss Lee, CEO of the YWCA of New York City; and Joanne Smith, Founder and Executive Director of Girls for Gender Equity. In this capacity, they helped provide the vision, structure and framework for YWI. Initiative Co-Chairs then formed a Steering Committee of grassroots advocates, policy experts and leaders of YWAC, who convened a Working Group process to develop recommendations for improving the lives of young women and girls.

Members of the Steering Committee led five Working Groups in total:

- **Health**
Grounded in a "social determinants of health" framework, the Health Working Group examined available data on disparities in health outcomes, focused on gaps in coverage for basic healthcare and highlighted programs that are reaching the highest-need groups of young women and girls.
- **Economic & Workforce Development**
The Economic & Workforce Development Working Group focused on how economic mobility and preparation for entering the workforce need to be fully integrated in the school setting, while expanding options for young women and girls who have left the school system.

- **Community Support & Opportunity**

Embracing a “whole girl” approach, the Community Support & Opportunity Working Group examined the issues of young women and girls in deep poverty – overwhelmingly those of color – and specifically focused on how policy change translates into implementation.

- **Education**

Focusing on the education of young women and girls in the most inclusive sense, the Education Working Group examined how shifts in school climate and curricula, as well as the expansion of afterschool and out-of-school services, could enhance educational outcomes for young women and girls.

- **Anti-Violence & Criminal Justice**

The Anti-Violence & Criminal Justice Working Group focused on reducing young women and girls’ interactions with the criminal justice system, increasing safety and respect for their rights and dignity during police interactions and while in custody and reshaping responses to violence so they uphold young women’s survivorship, agency and resilience.

YWI also engaged a Data Working Group to gather quantitative and qualitative data to inform the recommendations.

Lastly, YWI included a comprehensive communications strategy on social media platforms– #SheWillBe – which aimed to counter the negative messages that young women and girls receive from the media and promote the ongoing engagement of young women and girls in their own voices.

This report documents the framework of YWI, details the convening process and summarizes some (although not nearly all) current realities faced by young cis and transgender women and girls in New York City.

Recommendations from the working groups are summarized as follows:

Overarching Recommendations

1. Establish a standing Young Women’s Initiative and Young Women’s Advisory Council to monitor implementation of recommendations and continue to build new areas of focus.
2. Require each City agency to appoint a Gender Equity Liaison.
3. Establish a web-based platform for the Young Women’s Initiative that reflects the work of YWI and communicates the City’s efforts to improve the lives of young women and girls.
4. Work towards building a cross-agency “one-stop” youth-centered digital platform that can support youth with information relevant to a service they are receiving,

- function as a searchable tool for accessing services in neighborhoods and serve as a digital case manager.
5. Work towards the creation of a shared data infrastructure that enables youth-serving City agencies to align service delivery, starting with highest-need youth who touch multiple systems (foster care youth, runaway and homeless youth, etc.)
 6. Commit to increasing cultural humility in service delivery by implementing training for City employees and City contractors focused on undoing structural inequity. This training should feature specific protocols, developed in consultation with advocates, for interacting with young women, youth who have been exposed to trauma, TGNC youth and youth involved in commercial sexual exploitation or survival sex.
 7. Work towards requiring all City agencies and City contractors serving young women and girls to implement consumer-centered planning groups that will evaluate service delivery and make ongoing recommendations on areas for improvement.
 8. Convene a task force to explore implementing standardized data collection practices across City agencies and for City contractors. In addition, in an effort to fully understand gender-based disparities in New York City, create standardized practices to report outcomes by important characteristics, including race and gender.
 9. Collect disaggregated data on sexuality and gender identity separately, so as to better understand the experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual communities, distinguished from data collected about transgender and gender-non-conforming New Yorkers.
 10. In order to better understand the experiences of Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI) young women and girls, work with City agencies to collect disaggregated data on the AAPI community.
 11. In order to better understand the experiences of young women and girls who identify as mixed race or multiracial, work with City agencies to collect disaggregated data on multiracial New Yorkers.
 12. In order to better understand the experiences of Middle Eastern/North African (MENA) young women and girls, work with City agencies to align the City's data collection processes with recommendations from the US Census' proposal to introduce a Middle Eastern/North African (MENA) category into its demographic data collection.

Health

1. Improve access to transgender health services by expanding provider training citywide and ensuring that all NYC Health + Hospitals medical residents receive training on transgender healthcare.
2. Develop a network of community-based young adult health and reception centers providing a range of services that can include comprehensive primary care, sexual and reproductive health services, dental care and mental health care.
3. Expand the Nurse-Family Partnership® (NFP), a proven model for better birth outcomes for first-time parents and their children.
4. Work with the New York Police Department (NYPD) to appoint a City liaison for

- health centers, specifically focusing on abortion providers.
5. Create a dedicated fund for access to contraceptives, including long-acting reversible contraception (LARC), which incorporates culturally relevant counseling, focuses on patient choice and integrates age- and developmentally-appropriate support for young people.
 6. Build on ThriveNYC's comprehensive plan to train school leadership, teachers, counselors and social workers on responding to the mental health challenges that students may be experiencing by connecting current community-based organizations that specialize in cultural humility training and support for school staff, particularly when student populations are primarily students of color, first generation students or new immigrant students.
 7. Work towards creating a health ombudsperson within schools across New York City.
 8. Grow the number of School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) and School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) Programs across New York City middle schools and high schools, placing the centers in areas where there are the greatest disparities with regard to access to healthcare. Additionally, expand access to confidential reproductive and sexual health care at existing SBHCs that serve middle schools.
 9. Secure the rights of youth in foster care, juvenile detention and all other government-operated and/or –regulated youth facilities to access comprehensive, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer (LGBQ) and Transgender Non-Conforming (TGNC)-inclusive health care, including culturally relevant sexual and reproductive health care and sexual health literacy.

Economic & Workforce Development

1. Work towards a significant expansion of the Department of Youth and Community Development's (DYCD) Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) to a year-round employment program that includes a summer job and reaches all young people who apply.
2. Work towards ensuring that every school provides students meaningful access to guidance and career counseling by expanding the number of school guidance counselors.
3. Expand college access programs and services, as well as career training, including improving digital access to information about higher education options; call on New York State to expand the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) to part-time students; create pathways to the City University of New York (CUNY) by expanding programs that allow students to prepare for and retake placement exams; and expand the reach of workforce training organizations focused on young women.
4. Pilot a year-round, four-year guaranteed youth employment program and accompanying career readiness curriculum, incorporating an automatic savings component and wages based on the self-sufficiency standard.
5. Build on NYC Service's City Service Corps Program by dedicating 50% of slots to out of school, out of work youth (OSOW).
6. Convene OSOW youth and program providers to develop recommendations for a minimum set of wraparound services that should be included across programs that serve this population.

7. Ensure that young people are fully informed about the City's initiatives to engage New Yorkers in job, internship and workforce training opportunities available to them, including but not limited to SYEP.
8. Engage New York City employers, including those focused on science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM), to sign a pledge underlining their commitment to promoting gender equity in the workplace and to support youth employment.
9. Bolster the Department of Consumer Affairs' (DCA) and the Commission on Human Rights' (CHR) publicity on anti-discrimination, sexual harassment and workplace protection laws and other benefits like paid sick days by continuing comprehensive outreach and public information campaigns on these laws, with an eye towards the visibility of diverse New Yorkers, transgender women and gender-non-conforming people.
10. Ensure that the next progress report on Career Pathways incorporates key metrics on women workers, particularly noting progress on economic security for women workers in the industries dominated by women that are among the Administration's Industry Partnerships focus (healthcare, retail and food service). Also, the report should incorporate an analysis on the status of younger women entering the workplace.

Community Support & Opportunity

1. Ensure full local implementation of the Human Resources Administration's (HRA) recent policy change allowing cash assistance recipients the ability to enroll in an educational program in order to meet their work requirement.
2. With the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO), pilot an initiative that provides young women and girls who are head-of-household with benefits that meet the self-sufficiency standard for their neighborhoods, along with comprehensive case management.
3. Close gaps in foster care services by creating a single entity that is responsible for transitional-aged foster youth in every borough, specializing in services for youth ages 21-24.
4. Ensure that the newly appointed Supportive Housing Task Force prioritizes the complex housing needs of runaway and homeless youth (RHY), including those who may be young parents.
5. Work to eliminate barriers to housing for high-need individuals who are head-of-household at the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) by facilitating access to NYCHA for domestic and intimate partner violence survivors and expanding the Family Re-entry Pilot Program at NYCHA to women, ensuring family preservation for formerly incarcerated individuals.

Education

1. Ensure comprehensive in-school support for parenting young people.
2. Work towards curtailing referrals to the criminal justice system and fostering positive school environments.
3. Call on New York State to convene a task force to assess cultural relevance of curricula across subject areas in middle and high school. Explore the grounding of curricula in core content that challenges racism, ableism and sexism, and ensure that it is LGBTQ and TGNC-affirming. Additionally, incorporate five or more books, materials, essays, videos, etc. in current curricula from a non-majority perspective each year in middle and high school.
4. Require comprehensive sex education in New York City public schools in every grade, every year, that is medically accurate, age-appropriate and inclusive of issues that young people regularly experience such as consent, negotiation, LGBTQ and TGNC experience, gender-based violence and sexual harassment. Any expansion of the current sex education mandate should include proper teacher training, appropriate funding and a comprehensive evaluation of its implementation.
5. Expand access to arts education for young women and girls in schools, juvenile detention facilities and community-based organizations.
6. Grow the capacity of community-based organizations providing leadership development opportunities for young women and girls.
7. Work with teacher training programs at CUNY to pilot trainings for educators focused on cultural humility and teaching content from an intersectional feminist lens. Once piloted, this program could be used as a model across other teacher-training institutions.
8. Work with community-based organizations and teacher-leaders to deliver professional development to faculty across the academic disciplines, focused on undoing implicit bias and teaching from an intersectional feminist lens.
9. Test a supplemental school climate survey that accompanies the New York City Department of Education's (DOE) current survey to reflect student-driven assessment questions to more accurately evaluate school climate for key indicators identified by youth.
10. Convene a Teacher Advisory Council consisting of young people and teacher representatives to oversee the implementation of education-specific recommendations that reports back to the Young Women's Initiative.

Anti-Violence & Criminal Justice

1. Ensure more proportionate enforcement and penalties for low-level offenses through summons reform and decreasing or eliminating arrests.
2. Expand diversion programs for women in conflict with the law by establishing a task force exploring the design and implementation of a pre-arrest diversion program reflecting the principles of Seattle's Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) Program.
3. Ensure that young women's rights and dignity are respected when interacting with law enforcement by requiring the NYPD to promote communication, transparency and accountability in everyday interactions between the NYPD and the public; ensure due process, transparency and accountability regarding property seized during the

course of an arrest and civil forfeiture; develop, enact and effectively implement NYPD policies around sexual misconduct, how to conduct frisks of women and on the use of force against women who are pregnant; conduct an audit of the implementation of the Patrol Guide provisions to ensure respect for the rights of TGNC New Yorkers; continue to monitor full implementation and enforcement of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) in all City correctional facilities; and implement NYPD training on implicit bias on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion, immigration status, housing status and age, with particular attention to perceptions about youth in the sex trades, in addition to current training related to race and implicit bias.

4. Conduct a meaningful review of current policies relating to the safe and appropriate housing of transgender women and gender nonconforming people in City detention facilities in collaboration with transgender people and advocates.
5. Comprehensively work towards reducing pretrial detention rates, exploring the transition of young women into community-based detention facilities and creating a community justice model with a view towards closing Rikers Island.
6. With the guidance of survivors of violence, expand, improve and rebrand Family Justice Centers (FJCs) in New York City.
7. Develop and fund alternative reception centers for young women who may be experiencing violence.
8. Invest in a continuum of prevention and intervention services designed to end violence against cis and transgender girls and young women and their LGBTQ and TGNC peers experiencing commercial sexual exploitation or who are engaged in survival sex.
9. Reduce criminalization of survivors of violence by working with District Attorneys to sponsor frequent warrant forgiveness events to clear up summons warrants without fear of arrest; establish a task force to review mandatory arrest policies in response to domestic violence; and ensure a full ban on the confiscation or citation of possession or presence of condoms as evidence of any prostitution-related offense.
10. Improve responses to violence for survivors who are immigrant women by working with the NYPD to improve language access services; align internal criteria for issuing U Nonimmigrant Status certifications and T Nonimmigrant Status declarations with the minimum standards set in federal regulations and make such criteria publicly available; and make funding available to anti-violence organizations to ensure 24-hour access to telephonic interpretation and increase the number of trained and certified interpreters who can respond to calls for assistance.
11. Enhance the Human Resource Administration's (HRA) and the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence's (OCDV) work within the DOE to better identify teen dating violence victims and connect them to services when needed. Additionally, prioritize funding for community-based mediation, peer support and bystander intervention programs designed specifically for young survivors to prevent and address violence without engaging the criminal legal system.

The City Council and Administration look forward to reviewing these recommendations, while continuing to prioritize and support young women and girls in the City of New York.

