

An effective system must ensure that young people have viable opportunities to achieve all of the above.

### **The Right Service for Every Youth at the Right Time**

Young adults who have exited the education system unprepared for the workforce vary widely in their levels of work readiness and academic achievement. Some may have acquired perilously few high school credits while others may have already achieved a diploma. Young people in both groups can be equally far away from even a basic grasp of the workplace skills and norms required to hold down a job (see sidebar).

The system we need must meet the needs of each young adult at their own stage of readiness – regardless of how many years of school they have completed or how ready they are for the world of work. For some, that means reconnection to the education system, which now offers promising new opportunities through the Department of Education's Multiple Pathways to Graduation and Alternative Schools and Programs (District 79) offices, though these too must be scaled up to meet the demand for these services.

For others, particularly those young people with too few skills and too little time for high school completion, current services are scarce, thinly funded, and often disconnected in their own right. Turning this around – building the right combination of effective programs with the resources, capacity, and interconnections required to dramatically change young people's lives – is the "invention challenge" that stands before us.

We have strong examples of programs that are striving to work with young adults toward these goals, but these programs have limited capacity and are few and far between. Still, they can serve as models from which to build a system that must be solidly grounded in the best principles and practices of youth development and have the ability to embrace young people where they are and take them to where they need to go.

The system we envision must have the capacity to serve young people with a diverse set of talents, challenges, and needs. For example:

- Young adults who are not yet ready for GED/high school-level programs. Often termed "pre-GED," these young people have literacy and numeracy skills below the sixth grade level. These individuals need long-term, intensive programming to develop academic skills and rebuild their confidence and self-esteem, given the challenges and, often, failures they have already experienced.
- Young adults without a diploma nor the ability or desire to return to school, but who are ready to work towards earning a GED. This group requires supported work-based experiences in order to build competencies and make connections between skill development and employment.
- Young adults with a GED or diploma, but disproportionately low basic skills and need for assistance in bolstering these competencies. These youth may need tutoring to improve academic skills for specific jobs/careers, attainment of post-secondary credential or college degree, work-readiness/pre-employment skills including high focus on training, career awareness and preparedness, intensive skills development for specific jobs/careers.
- Young adults who have a GED or diploma and some workforce experience, but need support that is focused on employment. With these individuals, the challenge is supporting them in their current job while training the worker for his or her next job.



The Youth Bureau system has evolved the initial service-coordinating role. Many have developed comprehensive infrastructures that administer programs, measure outcomes and demand enhanced accountability that exceed the responsibilities contemplated by current funding streams. The New York City Department of Youth and Community Development is an excellent example. With revitalized funding, Youth Bureaus would be able to assume even greater responsibilities - to apply monitoring skills well beyond current expectations.

**Youth Employment:** Support funding of at least \$35 million for Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). Tremendous demand for SYEP continues – New York City’s program saw a 30 percent increase in applications to 93,000, which was a new record. In the long term, we urge that SYEP is enacted as a statutory program.

**Disconnected Youth:** We urge the Governor and the Legislature to work together to develop a statewide strategy to address the staggering needs of disconnected youth. We also urge the expansion of statewide programming for these young people. Together with the Community Service Society and United Neighborhood Houses, we have launched the Campaign for Tomorrow’s Workforce, which is a coalition of organizations and leaders committed to envisioning, championing, and building a system to solve the crisis of “disconnected” young adults aged 16 to 24 who are not in school nor engaged in work. The full vision document for this effort is attached to this testimony.

**Youth Workforce:**

Extend Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) to youth funding streams. We applaud the recent provision of cost of living adjustments (COLAs) for DOH, OCFS, OMH, OMRDD and OASAS for community and local government providers.

*Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.*