



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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Testimony of Liza Pappas
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To the New York City Council Committees on Education and General Welfare
On Support for Homeless Students

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Good morning Chairpersons Dromm and Levin and members of the City Council. My name is Liza Pappas. I am an education policy analyst at the New York City Independent Budget Office, where I have conducted the agency's research on the issues faced by students in temporary housing—with a particular focus on students in the city's homeless shelter system. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

In IBO's report [*Not Reaching the Door*](#) we looked in depth at the multilayered challenges temporarily housed students encountered in getting to school in school years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. The number of students facing these challenges has grown since we issued our report. According to Department of Education statistics, last school year, 105,133 students spent at least some part of the year in temporary housing, a 5 percent increase over the prior year.

For students and their families living in the shelter system, just getting to school often proved daunting as they faced long commutes and other transportation difficulties, competing demands on their time from other city agencies, along with the transitory nature and stress of life in a shelter. As a result, students who were identified as spending at least some part of the school year in the shelter system had average daily school attendance rates well below those of students in permanent housing or those doubled-up in the homes of friends or family.

While the average attendance rate for students living in shelters increased a bit in 2015-2016, the most recent school year for which we have data, their attendance rate remains well below that of students in permanent housing or who were doubled-up. In 2015-2016, the overall attendance rate for students in the shelter system was just over 82 percent compared with over 90 percent for students who were permanently housed or doubled-up. Students in the shelter system had lower attendance rates at every grade level. A table showing attendance rates by grade and housing situation for school years 2013-2014 through 2015-2016 is attached to my testimony.

Students residing in the shelter system also had substantially higher rates of chronic absenteeism, which the Department of Education defines as students who are absent 10 percent or more of the school year—the equivalent of missing 18 or more school days. While the rate of chronic absenteeism among students living in shelters edged down in school year 2015-2016, nearly 62 percent were chronically

absent from school—more than twice the rate for their permanently housed and doubled-up peers. Rates of chronic absenteeism were highest in the early and high school grades. I have attached a table to this testimony that shows rates of chronic absenteeism by grade and housing situation for school year 2013-2014 through 2015-2016.

As an IBO [report](#) released this past April observed, students living in shelter tended to be concentrated in a relatively small number of city schools. In 2011-2012 there were 61 schools that served a population where more than 10 percent of students were identified as living in shelters. In school year 2015-2016 there were 155 schools (roughly 11 percent of 1,475 traditional public schools that year).

In our research, school staff overwhelmingly stressed that budget resources have been short of what is necessary to provide comprehensive and coordinated counseling, attendance outreach, and family engagement services. Since then, the city has begun to provide some resources specifically targeted to students living in shelters.

In January 2016, the city announced that all children in shelters enrolled in grades K-6 would be guaranteed busing to any school they attend if the distance from the shelter to the school is more than a half-mile and if parents so desire; the estimated annual cost was \$24 million. For the second year in a row, the city allocated \$10.3 million in educational support for students living in the shelter system. This year funds that had supported 10 attendance teachers were shifted to expand the Bridging the Gap social worker program to 10 additional schools, bringing the program to a total of 43 schools. In addition to school-based social workers, the fiscal year 2018 funds support after-school programs, special enrollment application processes, and technology to better connect Department of Education family assistants with schools, shelters, and families.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.

Average Attendance Rate by Housing Type, by Year

	2013-2014			2014-2015			2015-2016		
	Permanent	Doubled-Up	Shelter	Permanent	Doubled-Up	Shelter	Permanent	Doubled-Up	Shelter
K	91.8%	89.5%	80.7%	92.2%	90.4%	81.1%	92.6%	90.6%	81.9%
1	93.1%	90.9%	82.8%	93.4%	91.8%	83.1%	93.7%	92.0%	84.0%
2	93.6%	91.7%	84.3%	94.1%	92.6%	85.0%	94.3%	92.9%	85.6%
3	94.1%	92.2%	85.5%	94.4%	93.2%	86.0%	94.8%	93.5%	86.9%
4	94.3%	92.7%	86.2%	94.7%	93.6%	86.3%	95.0%	93.9%	87.1%
5	94.3%	92.9%	86.3%	94.8%	93.8%	86.9%	95.1%	93.9%	87.5%
6	93.9%	92.6%	84.4%	94.5%	93.4%	85.5%	94.8%	93.7%	86.5%
7	93.5%	91.9%	83.9%	94.0%	92.8%	84.3%	94.5%	93.2%	85.2%
8	92.2%	90.9%	81.7%	92.8%	91.8%	82.5%	93.3%	92.5%	83.7%
9	85.6%	85.5%	68.8%	86.9%	86.3%	68.1%	87.6%	86.2%	70.3%
10	84.9%	85.7%	70.2%	85.8%	85.6%	70.3%	86.7%	86.6%	72.3%
11	88.1%	87.6%	74.9%	89.2%	87.7%	75.6%	89.3%	87.5%	75.5%
12	83.8%	81.2%	71.9%	84.5%	82.4%	73.3%	85.1%	83.1%	73.8%
All	90.9%	90.2%	81.0%	91.6%	91.0%	81.3%	92.0%	91.3%	82.4%

NOTE: Excludes PreK students as well as students attending charter schools. Students with no attendance data were also excluded.
New York City Independent Budget Office

Chronic Absenteeism Rates by Housing Type, by Year

	2013-2014			2014-2015			2015-2016		
	Permanent	Doubled-Up	Shelter	Permanent	Doubled-Up	Shelter	Permanent	Doubled-Up	Shelter
K	29.0%	41.7%	73.7%	26.8%	37.9%	73.6%	26.1%	36.8%	72.3%
1	22.3%	34.0%	70.0%	21.2%	30.5%	63.8%	20.3%	30.9%	66.4%
2	19.7%	30.8%	65.5%	17.9%	26.2%	62.4%	17.6%	26.0%	60.6%
3	17.5%	26.8%	60.7%	16.4%	23.0%	58.9%	15.2%	22.9%	56.1%
4	16.7%	25.5%	59.3%	15.3%	20.7%	58.7%	14.9%	20.9%	55.3%
5	16.5%	23.7%	55.9%	14.9%	19.8%	55.5%	14.1%	19.9%	53.4%
6	18.3%	26.6%	58.6%	16.6%	21.1%	56.7%	15.4%	20.8%	53.8%
7	20.2%	28.4%	58.3%	18.0%	24.0%	57.2%	16.5%	22.7%	53.8%
8	24.3%	29.3%	62.2%	21.8%	27.6%	59.2%	20.3%	25.5%	56.1%
9	35.5%	39.2%	72.7%	32.4%	35.3%	71.5%	30.9%	36.7%	69.1%
10	39.9%	39.4%	73.4%	37.8%	39.1%	71.4%	36.5%	37.8%	70.3%
11	33.2%	34.3%	64.7%	30.4%	34.9%	64.4%	30.5%	34.9%	65.8%
12	46.3%	48.9%	71.2%	44.5%	47.3%	70.8%	44.1%	48.3%	71.5%
All	26.6%	32.6%	65.2%	24.6%	29.1%	63.8%	23.7%	28.8%	61.7%

NOTE: Excludes PreK students as well as students attending charter schools. Students with no attendance data were also excluded.
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