



**Testimony for the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearings – Finance
Delivered by Diana
Tuesday, May 21, 2020**

Hello Council Members. My name is Diana, I'm a student at High School for Environmental Studies, and a member of Sisters in Strength at Girls for Gender Equity, where I work with other young people to advocate and start conversations about different social issues that have affected the communities we know or are part of. Everyone must be able to feel safe in school and outside of school.

The budget plans to cut funding to public schools, cut SYEP and summer programming for youth, while protecting the NYPD from budget cuts. To start off, some parents rely on youth for financial income, especially now since a lot of parents/caregivers are unable to work. SYEP was a way for young people to get out of their home environments, which may be emotionally draining and unsafe. Students are stressed enough as it is with their own issues to deal with. Online learning has negatively impacted our mental health, which is important for us to access mental health support but many are not able to. I am about to be a senior which means more pressure in schools with limited college access programs just like my own that only has one college counselor. Going back to school will already be surrounded by chaotic and triggering feelings which would not be helped with more police presence in schools.

This is not the time to make cuts to programs that support young people. We need access to any sorts of income to allow parents who are unable to access stimulus checks. We need money for necessities and also for self-care and joy. In regards to school, we need resources like counselors, RAPP coordinators and college counselors. COVID-19 has impacted my access to college preparation because our one college counselor is overwhelmed and holding a lot, which adds to more stress. We all deserve the need to feel safe! We need to direct this funding towards providing more FACT BASED, anti-oppressive information to communities. We should be able to invest into the education for the upcoming school year than to have people triggered by police presence.