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**Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Youth Services Committee  
Re: *Oversight - Summer 2022 Programming Readiness***

**March 4, 2022**

Thank you for the chance to testify today on summer programming readiness. Congratulations, Chair Stevens and all the new members of the Youth Services Committee, on your first hearing.

My name is Maggie Moroff. I am the Coordinator of the ARISE Coalition, a group of nearly 50 organizational and over 70 individual members who have been working together since 2008 to push for systemic changes to improve access to quality programming, day-to-day experiences and long-term outcomes for youth with disabilities in New York City schools. I am also the Senior Special Education Policy Coordinator at Advocates for Children of New York, but I come before you today on behalf of ARISE.

My message today is simple but must not be ignored. Any summer programming the City undertakes or supports must be designed from the outset to include all youth, including those with a range of disabilities. In the past, that has not been the case. Last summer, we saw huge problems around access and inclusion in summer programming. For example, we saw students told they could not participate in Summer Rising enrichment programming specifically because of their disabilities. We heard from parents whose children have a legal right to transportation because of their individual disabilities but could not attend Summer Rising because the DOE provided no bus service home at the end of the day. One of the first cases I brought to the attention of the DOE about Summer Rising last year involved program staff at a CBO that would not allow a student to attend their program when they learned about the student's specialized needs, explaining that they were not equipped to serve the student.

This summer, the City must ensure that no student is turned away from city-funded programming because of their disabilities. Accommodations, modifications and other supports, including behavioral supports, as needed by individual youth must be available at all sites. The City needs to roll out a process well in advance of the summer for families to request the accommodations and supports their children need to participate in summer programming and receive written assurance that such supports will be provided. CBOs should receive training on working with students with disabilities and how to get additional support if needed. Programs must be located in fully accessible buildings. Youth with disabilities who require busing must be provided with appropriate transportation and transportation supports for all daily programming and any field trips offered for enrichment or academic purposes. Field trips need to be planned with all students in mind from the outset.

Without all this, summer programming will essentially exclude a large percentage of NYC's young people with disabilities.

It's time for NYC to step up as a leader in inclusion of people with disabilities. Removing the obstacles to full participation in the City's summer programs is a critical step toward making that goal a reality.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. I would, of course, be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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