



Advocates for Children  
of New York  
Protecting every child's right to learn



## SUPPORT STUDENTS WHO ARE HOMELESS

In 2016-17, a record **104,088 New York City students were identified as homeless**. This represents a **50 percent increase** from just five years ago. If these students made up their own school district, it would be one of the 30 largest districts in the nation.

Students in temporary housing have worse educational outcomes than their permanently housed peers. Outcomes are particularly bleak for students living in the City's shelters—38,000 students in 2016-17. **More than half of these students miss at least one month of school per year**. Only 15% score proficiently in reading, and only 12% score proficiently in math. 10% of middle and high school students living in shelter are suspended from school.

### FY 2018 BUDGET

The final FY 18 budget included \$10.3 million in one-year funding for 43 DOE “Bridging the Gap” social workers, plus a supervising social worker, to work with students living in shelters at schools with high numbers of these students; after-school literacy programs at shelters; enrollment events at shelters; and health and mental health services at schools.

### FY 2019 EXECUTIVE BUDGET

While the FY 19 Preliminary Budget omitted this funding, the FY 19 Executive Budget restores the \$10.3 million for FY 19 only and adds \$1.6 million for FY 19 only to fund the following supports:

- » 10 additional school-based Bridging the Gap social workers (for a total of 53 social workers)
- » 2 additional Students in Temporary Housing Content Experts (for a total of 10)
- » Additional enrollment support

The Executive Budget also includes funding for additional after-school reading programs at shelters.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the growing number of students in temporary housing, the modest funding increase in the Executive Budget is not sufficient. In order to assist students who are homeless who are currently being left behind, the final FY 19 budget must **baseline the \$11.9M** and **add and baseline an additional \$19M** for the following:

- » Establish a Deputy Chancellor's Office for Highly Mobile Students (\$1M)
- » Hire Field Support Center Directors for Highly Mobile Students (\$4.5M)
- » Increase the number of DOE Bridging the Gap school-based social workers for students in shelters from 53 to 100 and hire additional supervisory staff (\$7M)
- » Hire 50 DOE social workers to provide intensive supports at shelters to address education-related issues (\$6.5M)

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## » HIGH-LEVEL LEADERSHIP FOR HIGHLY MOBILE STUDENTS

Given the number of students in temporary housing and the tremendous need for support, **the DOE should appoint a Deputy Chancellor for Highly Mobile Students** to work across agencies and DOE divisions to develop and implement policies to better serve students in temporary housing and students in foster care. A Deputy Chancellor would oversee the DOE's Students in Temporary Housing program and spearhead initiatives to increase attendance and address common barriers these students face in accessing educational programs and services.

## » FIELD SUPPORT CENTER DIRECTORS FOR HIGHLY MOBILE STUDENTS

DOE Field Support Centers (FSCs) are responsible for supporting schools by providing strategic and policy guidance and professional development. While each FSC has a Director for Special Education and a Director for English Language Learners (ELLs), as well as staff teams focused on special education and ELLs, the FSCs have no staff focused on students in temporary housing or students in foster care. Given the particular laws and policies that apply to these students and the barriers they face, **each Field Support Center should have a Director for Highly Mobile Students** and a team focused on these students. These Directors would support schools in serving students in temporary housing, provide professional development to school staff, and work to track and improve outcomes for students in temporary housing.

## » CONTINUING TO BRIDGE THE GAP

The FY 19 Executive Budget provides funding for 10 additional DOE Bridging the Gap social workers who work with students living in shelters at schools with high numbers of these students (for a total of 53 social workers). These social workers provide counseling services, connect students with academic support, and help to combat chronic absenteeism. This modest increase in social workers falls far short of meeting the need. More than 150 schools serve a population in which 10 percent or more of the students live in shelter, and most of these schools do not yet have a Bridging the Gap social worker. To fill this gap, **the City should increase the number of school-based social workers for students in shelters from 53 to 100.**

*“[The Bridging the Gap social worker] collaborates with families, school staff, outside caseworkers, doctors, counselors, shelter school liaisons, attendance personnel — you name it! When a family [who is homeless] comes to the school, she meets with them, truly listens to their story, and does her best to empower them with resources.”*

— An Elementary School Administrator

## » ENHANCING EXISTING SUPPORT

Many children in shelter will attend schools without a Bridging the Gap social worker and will not have any DOE support at their shelter. Currently, there are approximately 117 DOE Family Assistants who work in shelters, but there are not nearly enough for all shelter placements. Moreover, these Family Assistants are not required to have a college degree or any formal training in social work or education. They are not a substitute for trained social workers who could provide the social-emotional support and advocacy that this population needs. **The DOE should hire 50 shelter-based social workers** to provide intensive supports at shelters to address education-related issues.