



# DIGNITY IN SCHOOLS

## **Divest from Policing, Invest in Healing: Demands for a Restorative and Just Budget**

During and in the aftermath of this public health crisis, it is especially urgent that we continue the momentum for school climate reform with a financial commitment. As the city navigates budget gaps, schools must not carry the weight of cuts while agencies responsible for the criminalization of young people and communities, with already bloated budgets, remain untouched and unquestioned. The Dignity in Schools Campaign - NY demands the following:

### **Demand #1: Keep teachers and social workers in schools and commit to restorative justice, healing, mental health support, and trauma-informed responses to conflict.**

COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of prioritizing mental health, relationships, and community in our schools. Educators, students, and families need training in restorative approaches and targeted mental health interventions to support trauma-informed healing now and upon returning to school in the fall. The City should support schools by:

- *Rejecting the hiring freeze on teachers and social workers proposed in the Citywide Savings Plan.*
- *Increasing and baselining funding to ensure one social worker and guidance counselor per 150 students and financially supporting schools in the hiring of peacebuilders and restorative justice coordinators.*
- *Substantially supporting access to restorative justice curriculum and resources for educators to ensure student trauma is addressed in the classroom.*
- *Including and baselining \$15 million in the FY 2021 budget to launch and sustain a Mental Health Continuum to support the significant behavioral health needs of students in designated neighborhoods and high-need schools.*

### **Demand #2: Expand health and sanitation measures in schools to protect students, staff, and our communities.**

Upon returning to school, students, staff, parents, and other school community members need resources to ensure that their health and safety is prioritized. We demand that the City:

- *Ensure all schools have the staffing, funding, and supplies necessary to maintain exceptional, and, at minimum, sanitary conditions.*
- *Training for members of the school community, to implement and support social distancing at schools.*
- *Police should not be assigned to enforce social distancing in schools.*

### **Demand #3: Restore funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), and with it, the 75,000 jobs that young New Yorkers are counting on.**

SYEP provides young people with the opportunity to gain new skills and experiences when school is out while helping to support their families. New York City youth cannot afford to lose this vital source of income. The City must uphold its commitment to young people and their families by:

- *Supporting community-based organizations who are preparing to offer meaningful remote Summer Youth Employment opportunities if social distancing remains in effect through the summer.*
- *Work with immigration advocates and CBOs to provide SYEP opportunities for undocumented youth.*
- *Provide summer programming to keep youth engaged, which will prevent isolation, loneliness, and further trauma, as well as minimize police interactions .*

### **Demand #4: Reduce spending for school policing and institute a hiring freeze on the NYPD.**

As we move through the crisis of the pandemic and prepare for reopening the city later this year, we must invest in systems that support young people, not systems that criminalize them. The city should cut NYPD spending and shift those funds to support mental health, restorative justice, and youth employment by:

- *Instituting a hiring freeze on the NYPD, including the School Safety Division, and plan for a long-term reduction in police headcount.*
- *Move to permanently remove police and invasive security from schools by immediately shrinking the inflated school policing budget by limiting overtime, equipment, and OTPS, and moving the administration to identify further cost savings.*