



**Written testimony submitted to the Committee on Finance
on the Executive Budget Proposed Funding for Libraries
June 10, 2026**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the executive library budget. I will focus on the need for investment in libraries as a key component of family support infrastructure, and the potential of libraries to contribute to reductions in child welfare involvement in New York City.

Founded in 2021, NYC Family Policy Project (FPP) explores and builds evidence—through original research, policy and data analysis—for the policy visions of parents and youth impacted by the child welfare system. Policy visions developed by the parent and youth advocacy groups [Rise](#), [YouthNPower: Transforming Care](#), [Black Families Love and Unite](#) and [Narrowing the Front Door to NYC's Child Welfare System](#) emphasize the need for a limited child welfare system and expansive and reparative investment in families and communities. FPP focuses on economic investments that can strengthen family well-being and reduce child welfare involvement; investments in community conditions that support healthy family life; and policy and practice efforts to move toward a more limited child welfare system with a narrow front door.

FPP is in support of the NYC Public Library Action Network's (NYC PLAN) call for 0.5% of the city budget for libraries as a baseline commitment— a request which Mayor Mamdani committed to throughout his campaign. Unfortunately, the proposed budget falls short of that promise. While Mayor Mamdani has guaranteed stable library funding at \$526 million for three years that represents just 0.42% of the city budget, this is down from 0.45% committed last year.

Significant research shows that where a family lives influences a wide range of outcomes, including [health and mental health](#), [economic mobility](#), [crime](#) and [child development](#). Even side-by-side communities with similar demographics can have [very different family health and well-being profiles](#). In short, neighborhood conditions shape family stress, safety, connection and access to resources in ways that can safeguard against or compound hardship.

For decades, a small number of NYC neighborhoods have borne the brunt of child welfare system involvement. Hotline calls, investigations and family separations are [highly concentrated and segregated in NYC](#), where the 15 neighborhoods that drive involvement have remained largely the same for two decades. While poverty is a significant driver of child welfare involvement, and child poverty is high in these neighborhoods, decades of research shows that neighborhoods exert their own influence on family life, safety and well-being.

Parents understand intuitively that raising children can be made easier, or harder, by the conditions that surround families. A [playground](#) down the block, a [local library](#) with 'mommy & me' classes, or a nearby

grocery store with healthy food options—simple neighborhood amenities can make everyday life feel more supported.

Public libraries serve as a vital resource for families, promoting [health](#) and well-being and connecting patrons to needed resources. “Libraries don’t just provide free access to books and other cultural materials,” NYU sociologist Eric Klinenberg [has written](#), “they also offer things like companionship for older adults, de facto child care for busy parents, language instruction for immigrants and welcoming public spaces for the poor, the homeless and young people.”

One study found that summer educational services at the New York Public Library created a [“safe haven”](#) for learning, supporting community connection, resilience-building and the formation of reading and learning habits, especially for low-income children.

These impacts likely extend to parents, too. In a study interviewing caregivers to understand how they thought a neighborhood’s built environment could be affecting child maltreatment, parents described shared public places like parks, libraries and community centers as [“relief valves”](#) that give children outlets and allow caregivers to rest and connect with others. As one parent explained: “Community centers, playgrounds, libraries...things that the children can do that are positive, so parents can kind of get that reprieve...maybe be at home prepping dinner or just having a moment to relax.”

[Social infrastructure](#) and civic organizations like libraries play a distinct role in [supporting collective efficacy](#). Neighborhoods with high collective efficacy consistently have lower crime, reduced child welfare involvement, stronger local engagement and greater resilience during crises. On child welfare, one study in Chicago found that [neighborhoods with a stronger social fabric had lower substantiated cases of neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse](#). In NYC too, neighborhood collective efficacy appears to have an effect on child welfare involvement. An analysis by the Columbia University Center on Poverty and Social Policy found that, controlling for other factors, higher rates of collective efficacy are associated with lower rates of indicated investigations and foster care entries at the zip code level.

As Mariame Kaba, NYC PLAN member [shared with FPP](#), “Families, or anybody who’s part of the library, can learn from library workers. The workers get to know you, and your kids have another adult in the world that they can count on. My librarian became a trusted friend and confidant—somebody I saw all the time who was always there. For people that are struggling to be single parents for example, or that don’t have a community of folks, this is another way we’re building community.”

The city has made progress reducing child welfare system involvement since 2019, with investigations and foster care placements declining by 10% or more. Sustaining these gains however, especially in the face of federal cuts, will require that the city and state adopt new policies and broader public health approaches that invest in family support infrastructure and buffer families from hardship.

FPP supports NYC PLAN’s request that public library funding be increased to at least 0.5% of the total city budget in this upcoming fiscal year. This would translate to \$97 million more in public library funding for the FY27 cycle.