



David A. Hansell, Commissioner
Testimony to the New York City Council
Committees on General Welfare and Juvenile Justice
March 27, 2018

“New York City Council Fiscal Year 2019 Preliminary Budget Hearing”

Good afternoon Chairs Levin and King, and members of the Committees on General Welfare and Juvenile Justice. I am David Hansell, Commissioner of the New York City Administration for Children's Services. With me are Lisa Parrish, Deputy Commissioner of Financial Services, Lorelei Vargas, Deputy Commissioner of Child and Family Well-Being, and Felipe Franco, Deputy Commissioner of Youth & Family Justice. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the ACS Fiscal Year 2019 preliminary budget. I would like to take a brief moment to welcome the members who have newly joined the Committees, and to thank those of you who are returning. I have appreciated ACS's transparent and collaborative relationship with the City Council and the leadership and members of these committees, and I look forward to continuing this relationship as we move ACS forward.

As some of you already know, my career has been dedicated to serving vulnerable communities. There are few missions more important than that of Children's Services, and I am honored to have led the agency in this mission for just over one year now. I remain committed to moving ACS forward and building on the Mayor's historic investment in our agency and our reform agenda. One year ago I shared with the Council my plan to conduct a top to bottom review of the agency's protective and preventive functions, and to implement necessary reforms. Today, I am pleased to share updates on the progress that we have since achieved.

Moving ACS Forward

There have been many exciting changes and significant practice reforms at ACS over the past year, and the voice of our staff has been instrumental in making our system more efficient and effective. Over the course of the last year I have visited almost every ACS office location, met with thousands of our staff, participated in a number of Town Halls with our frontline Child Protective staff and others, and completed the agency's first ever staff engagement survey. Much of my agenda as Commissioner has been driven directly by the input and feedback I've received from the frontline, and I cannot overstate my appreciation for their commitment and dedication to our work.

Our Child Protective Specialists are first responders, charged with keeping children in this City safe, the same way that police and firefighters are first responders protecting us all. Over the last year, we have improved our child protective practice by strengthening accountability, enhancing quality assurance, bolstering investigations in the highest-risk cases, and deepening our relationships with governmental and nongovernmental partners.

While making these key improvements to our child-protection work, we also recognize that getting families the help they need to overcome challenges—including trauma, poverty, isolation, mental health issues, and domestic violence—is critical to keeping children safe. Over the last year, we've expanded the support we provide to children and families through preventive services, and taken major steps to strengthen our network of preventive providers. ACS has steadily increased the availability of

evidence-based prevention programs that are shown to reduce rates of maltreatment and improve overall child and family wellbeing. Thousands of families are receiving intensive counseling tailored to their needs, and thousands of parents are receiving parenting coaching to help them cope with the pressures they face and raise healthy children. Last year, Casey Family Programs noted that New York City is now at the forefront nationally in providing evidence-based preventive programs to support families.

We're seeing strong, positive outcomes from our preventive work. ACS's unprecedented investment in preventive services has continued to allow the agency to serve increased numbers of families through preventive services, while reducing the number of children placed in foster care. The number of children in foster care is now under 9,000—a momentous shift from the nearly 50,000 children in care 25 years ago.

Because we believe so strongly in prevention, we are taking that work even further. In September, we announced the creation of the new Division of Child and Family Well-Being, making ACS the first child welfare agency in the country to spearhead a new “primary prevention” approach, which seeks to reach families proactively with services, resources and educational messages that can support healthy children, families and communities.

Our Division of Youth and Family Justice has also made significant strides to improve the lives of children and families involved in the juvenile justice system, with a special focus on keeping young people strongly connected to their communities. We

are proud to say that fewer young people are being arrested and fewer young people are entering our juvenile justice system than ever before. Overall admissions to juvenile detention have decreased significantly year over year, dropping 32% from FY 2014 to FY 2017, and we have also successfully lowered the census of Close to Home residential placements by 20% from FY 2014 to FY 2017. Further, we developed and are instituting a number of enhancements to the Close to Home initiative that focus on improving youth monitoring and accountability, enhancing oversight of staff and providers, and increasing inter-agency partnerships.

As you know, only weeks after I started at ACS, the State enacted the long-awaited Raise the Age legislation. Since then, ACS has been working nonstop with the Mayor's Office and our sister City agencies on planning to implement the initial requirements of the Raise the Age legislation by October 1, 2018.

We've also made structural changes at ACS over the last year to help strengthen agency operations that support all of our programmatic work. Early in my tenure, I created a new Office of Accountability to centralize and strengthen all of our internal and external accountability functions. Our Chief Accountability Office reports directly to me and works closely with all of our program divisions and oversight entities. And more recently, we've created an Office of Organizational Effectiveness, to coordinate our efforts to streamline operations, improve business processes, and enhance overall agency efficiency.

State Budget Impact

We have done a great deal in the last year to strengthen ACS and improve outcomes for children in New York City, and we know there is always more to do. As we work to advance the programs and practices that have positioned New York City as a national model for child welfare and juvenile justice reform, we are deeply concerned by the threats posed by the proposed Executive Budget for State Fiscal Year 2019. The Governor's budget proposes to:

- Impose an arbitrary cap of \$320 million in State child welfare funding—a cap that would apply to New York City only—resulting in what we have calculated to be a \$129 million cut in 2019, based on programs and services currently in place and budgeted for next year. Last week, the Independent Budget Office reported that, with modified commitments in the January plan, the reduction in funding to the City would increase to \$161 million. This funding supports protective and preventive programs—core services that keep children safe and support families in New York City.
- Eliminate all State funding for our very successful Close to Home program, just when the number of youth in Close to Home is expected to more than double once Raise the Age is implemented; and
- Effectively exclude the City from accessing funding for Raise the Age. The City projects the costs of Raise the Age to be approximately \$200 million, and the Governor's budget would leave New York City to shoulder these costs without aid from the State.

These proposed state budget cuts would be the most drastic cuts to child welfare in New York City in decades. The last time the State made such drastic cuts to New York City's child-welfare system in the 1990s, the results were disastrous—the number of children admitted to foster care in New York City increased by 57%, and the average caseload of frontline child-protection workers swelled to 24 (double the current level).

It's important to note that these cuts would seriously jeopardize our significant progress and leadership within New York State. From 2010 to 2017, the number of children in foster care in New York City declined by 38.4%, while the number in the rest of New York State declined by 13.9%. The reason that foster care is declining almost three times faster in NYC than in the rest of the state, we believe, is the scope and scale of investments and improvements we've been making in New York City, particularly in our preventive programs that are helping keep families together.

I respectfully ask you to join us in urging the state to remove the child welfare cap, restore funding for Close to Home, and allow the City access to appropriate funding for Raise the Age. We stand by and fully support the Mayor and the City Council in fighting against any detrimental impacts the state budget may pose to New York City children and families.

As an agency dedicated to serving children and families through a wide continuum of services, ACS is uniquely positioned to help create a stable, more equitable foundation of opportunity for those we serve. I will dedicate my remaining testimony to highlighting core areas of our work.

Child Protection

Our Child Protective Specialists carry out some of the toughest, most challenging work in this city, so it is imperative that our staff is well equipped and fully supported in their work. With this in mind, we have made significant investments in tools, trainings and technology that frontline staff needs to increase safety and enhance their work with children and families.

Quality Assurance and Oversight

The most immediate reforms we made last year focused on strengthening quality assurance in our protective work. We restructured and reinvigorated our ChildStat model as a core part of the agency's quality improvement program. Now, child protective "zones" with defined geographic responsibilities across the City participate on a rotating basis to review their performance in relation to borough- and city-wide standards, and develop concrete recommendations to strengthen protective and investigative practice. Since the re-launch in May 2017, we have held more than 45 ChildStat review sessions, resulting in recommendations for zone-based and system-wide improvement.

To help strengthen case practice within the Division of Child Protection, we also created a new Quality Assurance team to provide frontline staff with real-time feedback on safety assessments, decision-making, and service provision.

We've worked closely over the last year with the State-appointed independent monitor, Kroll Associates. In December, Kroll released its monitoring report, outlining

eleven recommendations for strengthening our protective and preventive practice, all of which we have accepted, and we're well underway in implementing many of the reforms, including enhancements to our training, investigation protocols, and oversight mechanisms.

Investigative Consultants & NYPD Collaboration

ACS's Investigative Consultants have for many years assisted our child protective specialists with particularly challenging investigations and reviewed sensitive cases alongside other experts, including medical personnel, clinicians, and current law enforcement officials. Since the end of 2016, ACS increased the number of Investigative Consultants on staff by 28% and expanded our partnership with the NYPD in several ways:

- *Cross-training with NYPD:* Beginning in 2017, child protective frontline staff are now training alongside police investigators at the NYPD Police Academy, taking courses that include Forensic Interviewing and recognizing evidence and resources available to assist in investigations. In turn, NYPD staff attend specialized ACS training to deepen their understanding of child welfare issues, investigative process, and safety and risk assessment.
- *Instant Response Team Expansion:* Law enforcement is deeply involved in ACS investigations when there is reason to believe that there has been physical abuse, sexual abuse, or other criminal activity. In 2017, ACS and the NYPD made 5,579 Instant Response Team joint responses on investigations, and

police were brought into hundreds of other ACS investigations to provide support and expertise.

- *Neighborhood Coordination Officers:* In many neighborhoods, frontline child protective staff began working more closely with NYPD officers in 2017 at the precinct level, through its Neighborhood Coordination program. Many child protective workers have direct relationships with and access to precinct patrols in routine and emergency situations, rather than relying solely on 9-1-1 calls to summon police support.

Heightened Oversight Protocol

Under a new Heightened Oversight Protocol (HOP) that ACS put in place in 2017, an Investigative Consultant supervisor and a Child Protection manager or supervisor conduct a joint case review prior to initiating an investigation on all State Central Register reports where the maltreated child is 3 years old or younger, and the report involves a fatality, or alleges serious physical injury and/or sexual abuse. Under this new protocol, Investigative Consultants remain involved in cases and participate in further reviews in the course of the investigation, to provide enhanced support in these most serious cases.

Child Protection Caseload

In 2017 we hired over 600 new CPS, and we are on track to hire another 400 by the end of the fiscal year. With more frontline staff on board, we have been able to reduce the average investigative caseload from 14.8 in May 2017 down to 12 as of February 2018. Although ACS has some of the lowest caseloads among major child

welfare jurisdictions, we also know that the caseload metric doesn't always reveal the full story. There is nothing more important to our success than making sure we are doing everything possible to support our frontline CPS workers. By taking into account all of their job-related duties, we can better assess the real impact of our staffing and case management levels.

To that end, we are launching an innovative pilot program to help address CPS workload, in which Case Aides will provide hands-on support for CPS staff in a few Child Protective Units in the DCP Bronx North Borough Office. The Case Aides will carry out case-supportive tasks such as reaching out to collateral contacts, obtaining medical records and supervising visits. Staff Development Coordinators will assist with the planning and arrangements for CPS on-the-job training and other staff training coordination. This is an important initiative that we hope will demonstrate its value in supporting CPS in their work.

Training Expansion

More than 4,000 frontline child protective staff and supervisors received training in 2017 to strengthen their practices. The curricula includes a new Safety and Risk module to assist in developing stronger safety plans for children and an implicit bias module currently under development. The curriculum now also reinforces the importance of treating all families equally regardless of race, ethnicity or other irrelevant factors.

Supervisory and managerial training is also being enhanced, and to ensure continuity from the training academy to the field, ACS began in Fall 2017 to deploy Staff Development Coordinators and “coaches” in DCP borough offices to bridge the transition and reinforce the extensive up-front training program. We thank the Council for supporting these enhancements in the enacted FY2017-18 budget.

Mobile Technology

To strengthen CPS’s ability to conduct and document investigations, in April 2017, ACS provided all child protective staff with internet-activated smartphones with relevant apps and tools. Several hundred frontline staff are also part of a pilot project to use tablets in the field, and all frontline staff will have tablets within the next several months. This will strengthen CPS’s ability to conduct and document investigations by enabling CPS to download case information when and where needed, and upload case notes in the field, in court, or elsewhere.

Food Pantry

We’re also expanding the role of our Division of Child Protection in providing services to families. In December 2017 ACS collaborated with Food Bank for NYC to launch our first-ever emergency food pantry for families involved with ACS. It is located in the ACS Bronx South DCP Borough Office, where there is a high concentration of families struggling with food insecurity and we are thrilled that our child protective staff can connect families in the Bronx to healthy and nutritious food resources when they are in need.

Preventive Services

FY18 Investments in our preventive services helped us to implement critical changes to ensure providers can implement the best possible service models to support families and are appropriately compensated for doing so. Last March, ACS had a backlog of almost 500 families waiting months for preventive services that had been recommended for them following a child protective investigation. After an aggressive implementation of business process improvements, we eliminated that backlog by September 2017 and restored our ability to provide timely matching of families to preventive services. Since then, we've continued to improve the quality and consistency of services with additional system improvements.

Model Budget

The goal of preventive services is to help at-risk families develop skills to manage crises, maintain safety and stability within the home, and strengthen their ability to thrive within the community. Our non-profit partner provider agencies are among the best in the nation and they do extremely challenging work, so it is imperative that our providers receive the supports they need to do it well. Most of ACS's contracts with preventive agencies have been in place since 2007, with minimal budget increases. By early 2017, many providers were facing critical staff shortages because of inadequate salaries, which reduced capacity and contributed to the service backlog that I just mentioned.

Last spring ACS began a model contract review process, in close collaboration with many of our preventive providers, to assess where additional resources were

needed, and in the City budget for FY 2017-18, ACS received more than \$26 million in increased funding to develop a quality model budget to assist providers in raising salaries; retaining staff; strengthening training, supervision and quality assurance; and improving the delivery of services to children and families. ACS announced the model budget components in January of this year and we are in the final stages of amending provider contracts to implement the enhancements.

New Models for Preventive Services

We've launched a number of new program models and service protocols in the last year, in order to connect families with services that can most effectively meet their needs.

In 2017 ACS launched the Group Attachment Based Intervention (GABI) initiative, which provides access to trauma-informed, intensive attachment-focused therapy for our hardest to reach families, namely parents and very young children (ages 0-3) who have experienced significant trauma, housing instability, mental illness, domestic violence, and other challenges. GABI provides group settings where parents can connect with others experiencing similar challenges—and seeks to improve children's development, decrease their exposure to trauma and maltreatment, reduce parental stress, and boost parental social support and mental health.

In January 2018, ACS announced a protocol for expanded services to protect families at risk of, or experiencing, domestic violence. Under the new protocol, ACS's Investigative Consultants work on cases with families receiving prevention services when there are domestic violence risk factors and/or criminal history, a new adult has

been added to the household or has taken on a caretaker role, and there are children under 7 years of age in the household. In April 2018 ACS will also procure a demonstration project to test new methods for working with families experiencing domestic violence. This demonstration project will serve 100 families and 400 individuals experiencing domestic violence, who are under court-ordered supervision, or are referred to or seek ACS prevention services. The service model will allow families to receive both preventive services and a clinical therapeutic intervention for domestic violence.

Beginning this Spring we are also rolling out new preventive services focused on supporting families that have very high service needs, in particular those under Court-Ordered Supervision or at risk of court intervention. We will add more than 1,000 additional slots—including in evidence-based clinical models such as Functional Family Therapy and Child-Parent Psychotherapy—when this service model is fully implemented in FY2019.

All of these very intensive services will be located in all five boroughs and will require careful coordination between preventive programs and our ACS child protection teams assigned to work with families under court orders. By cultivating strong collaboration, we will improve the experience for parents and children in these especially urgent cases, while applying more resources to stabilizing families.

Child and Family Well-Being

ACS's new Division of Child and Family Well-Being (CFWB) aims to help families much earlier—to engage families before they ever reach the child welfare system, with resources and services to help them thrive. This new Division focuses on the factors that contribute to family wellbeing, including health, education, employment, and culture and uses place-based and population-based approaches to engage families and communities. CFWB's scope includes the agency's Community Partnerships Program networks, Safe Sleep Initiative, early care and education, primary prevention services, and a new Office of Equity Strategies that works to identify strategies to reduce inequities, implicit bias, and other factors that contribute to disparate outcomes for the families and communities we serve.

Safe Medication Campaign

One of the first major initiatives of the new Division was the Fall 2017 launch of ACS's Safe Medication campaign, an effort to help parents and caregivers ensure that medications and potentially dangerous household items are stored out of children's reach. In addition to this information campaign, we will distribute Medication Lock Boxes and Bags to families engaged with ACS and we will eventually share them across city agencies, as well as with programs that provide in-home services. Lock Boxes and Bags are easy and effective ways to keep medication accessible to parents, but out of children's reach.

Family Enrichment Centers

In the first half of 2018, ACS is helping launch an innovative new model for providing comprehensive, community-focused support to families, known as Family Enrichment Centers (FEC). FEC is a family-centered primary prevention strategy that is designed to reduce rates of child maltreatment and increase family stability and well-being. Everything about each Center—from the name, to the physical layout, to the services offered—is co-developed with families and the community. The FECs will be open to all families in their communities and will provide a range of services that support healthy child development. The first pilot Center is now open in the Hunts Point neighborhood of the Bronx, and two additional pilot Centers will be located in the Bronx and Brooklyn.

EarlyLearn NYC

The foundation of the Division of Child and Family Well-Being is early care and education. Since 2012, ACS's EarlyLearn NYC has provided high quality, full-day early care and education each year to over 30,000 children from birth through five-years-old. We are proud that this program has become a pillar for promoting healthy childhood development, while also providing wraparound support to families—a hallmark of EarlyLearn NYC.

As part of the Mayor's commitment to early education, ACS's EarlyLearn NYC contracts will be transferred and integrated into the DOE's Division of Early Childhood Education in early 2019. This integration will build on the important work done by EarlyLearn programs today, strengthening birth-to-five care and education in New York

City and creating a more seamless experience for children and families into elementary school and beyond. The transfer of EarlyLearn will also support the Mayor's 3K For All initiative, which will ultimately offer free, high-quality early education services to all three-year-olds in NYC.

As EarlyLearn NYC transfers to DOE, ACS will continue to administer the City's child care voucher system. We will continue our efforts to bolster the quality of care in this system, which serves 29,000 children under the age of 5, in collaboration with the Human Resources Administration (HRA), the Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and DOE. And we are committed to continued efforts to make child care available to some of the most vulnerable families in NYC, including many of whom are involved in our child welfare system.

Foster Care

NYC Interagency Foster Care Task Force

ACS remains focused on improved outcomes for young people in foster care, and we are heartened by the City Council's equal commitment to this priority. We thank the Council for its leadership and partnership in this effort and would like to acknowledge Chair Levin and Public Advocate James for their roles in shaping the work of the NYC Interagency Foster Care Task Force, which was established through City Council legislation in 2016. The Task Force, which is chaired by ACS, first convened in June 2017 with the goal of developing recommendations to improve services for youth in foster care and outcomes for those aging out of care. Last week, the Task Force

released a report containing actionable recommendations, several of which we are already moving to implement. ACS is committed to doing all that we can to advance these recommendations, and we look forward to working with the City Council, the Public Advocate, our sister agencies, providers, youth, parents, and advocates on these critical initiatives.

Foster Care Strategic Blueprint

The recommendations of the Foster Care Task Force are aligned with and build upon our Foster Care Strategic Blueprint, released in 2016, and the progress report issued last year, which identify ACS's key priorities and strategies for improving case practice and results for children and families in the foster care system—including family reunification, kinship placement, adoption, and supporting older youth. This focus, combined with the unprecedented investments by the de Blasio administration to strengthen child welfare, is yielding promising results.

Through our No Time to Wait initiative, ACS is implementing a range of strategies to improve permanency outcomes for children and youth in foster care. Last year, we partnered with Casey Family Programs to conduct “Rapid Permanency Reviews” (RPRs), which examined the cases of 2,500 children who had been in foster care for more than two years. These reviews identified case-, agency-, and system-level barriers to permanency. Based on the RPR findings, ACS is streamlining administrative processes and providing targeted technical assistance to foster care agencies to help reduce time to reunification and accelerate adoption and kinship guardianship (KinGAP) where appropriate.

In FY 2018 and scaling up through FY 2020, ACS and the Dave Thomas Foundation have established an \$11 million partnership to expand the Wendy's Wonderful Kids child-focused adoption recruitment model to increase the number of older children and children with special needs who exit foster care to a forever family through adoption and KinGAP.

The majority of children who enter foster care in New York City return home to their families. In Fiscal Year 2017 more than 2,000 children were reunified, 899 children were adopted, and 378 children exited foster care to KinGAP. While there is more work to be done, we are making solid progress toward our goal to connect children and youth in foster care to permanent, safe, and loving families.

Fostering College Success Initiative

We have expanded the Fostering College Success Initiative over the last year, helping more young people transitioning out of foster care to pursue higher education. In partnership with CUNY, we now have almost 100 young people enrolled in college classes, living in CUNY dorms at Queens College, College of Staten Island, and City College. We continue to work in close collaboration with CUNY to expand the program further in FY 19.

Juvenile Justice

Raise the Age

As you are aware, extensive planning is underway to prepare for the implementation of the initial requirements of the Raise the Age legislation by October 1,

2018. A citywide Steering Committee, chaired by the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice and including representatives from multiple city agencies and the State Office of Court Administration, has been working to guide the overall city-wide planning effort. As you might imagine, this is a significant undertaking. Given the very aggressive timeline for implementation of this important legislation, ACS is working to quickly expand our continuum of community-based preventive services for youth who are at risk of delinquency, and we are working with the NYC Department of Probation and others to increase diversion and Alternatives to Detention programs throughout the City. We are working in close collaboration with the NYC Department of Correction and in compliance with State Specialized Secure Detention requirements to bring new 16- and 17-year-olds and Rikers youth into our juvenile detention facilities and to develop program models and services at these facilities that meet the developmental needs of older adolescents. We are partnering with our provider agencies to prepare for post-adjudication 16- and 17-year-olds in Close to Home, and building upon our continuum of Alternative to Placement (ATP) services offered through ACS's Juvenile Justice Initiative, the largest ATP program in the City.

Close to Home

Close to Home is a juvenile justice reform that has allowed New York City youth to be placed in juvenile justice residential care near their home communities, rather than large institution-like settings upstate. Most youth in Close to Home spend approximately six months in small residential facilities around the City, and then are reunited with their families under ACS supervision through aftercare. In the five years since Close to

Home's launch, we have seen that the success of a young person's reintegration into the community rests largely on the strength of the aftercare supports they receive. With this in mind, we have initiated a set of enhancements to our aftercare program to improve outcomes for justice-involved youth and bolster public safety. Through these reforms, ACS will improve the transition from residential placement to aftercare, strengthen supervision to ensure that young people attend school and participate in other important programming, and follow up more aggressively in the rare instances where public safety issues arise.

Cure Violence Initiative

As you know, the City Council awarded \$250,000 to ACS in FY '15 to implement the Cure Violence Crisis Management Initiative, and has since increased the allocation to \$450,000. ACS adapted this initiative to tap into the network of Cure Violence providers to reduce the likelihood of gun violence in the City and enhance borough-based support for ACS youth in neighborhoods that are most at risk by addressing the underlying contributors to violence. Cure Violence providers engage youth in detention and placement through workshops and individual meetings, and support youth as they re-enter the community. Currently, ACS funds two additional Cure Violence contracts between our two secure detention sites through an intra-city agreement with the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice.

Strengthening Interagency Collaboration

The progress we're making in both our protective and preventive practice is partly the result of increased collaboration across City agencies over the last year. We all share a responsibility for protecting children and supporting families, and I'm pleased to report that we've expanded our interagency partnerships.

In March 2017, we executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) to share information between agencies about children and families in the shelter system. The MOU requires ACS and DHS to notify each other at critical points in a family's case, such as when a family ACS serves enters shelter, when there is a plan for a family to change shelter, and when there is a change in a child welfare case that may require a different level of intervention by DHS. In addition, the agreement also requires shelter providers to issue vital information to families, such as information on availability of child care and safe sleep practices for infants. All staff at 162 shelters citywide have been trained on the new protocol.

In August 2017, ACS and the Department of Education hosted a joint training for our staff on a new tiered-response protocol to share information about excessive absences that may suggest underlying child welfare concerns. Under this protocol, attendance records are more closely reviewed, and there is a clear process for quickly flagging cases where there may be issues of safety or educational neglect.

Last week, we announced that ACS and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) have entered a two-year MOU to increase the

number of youth in foster care participating in after-school programs that can enhance their academic achievement and social skills. This is a direct response to a recommendation from the Foster Care Task Force I mentioned earlier. We anticipate a number of additional interagency initiatives in response to other Task Force recommendations.

Budget Overview

ACS's proposed FY 2019 preliminary budget plan provides for operating expenses of \$2.57 billion, of which approximately \$789 million is city tax levy. Since the beginning of the de Blasio Administration the City has made, at full implementation, a \$218 million annual investment in ACS, including \$172 million to strengthen and improve outcomes for children and families in our Child Welfare system. The funding has bolstered ACS's training capacity for our staff and for provider agencies, drove a historic expansion of preventive services, supports much needed technology updates for our frontline staff and has fueled the launch of several groundbreaking innovations in service provision for children and families in the City.

Conclusion

As I reflect on my first year at ACS, I remain honored and humbled to serve the children and families of our City as ACS Commissioner. The work that ACS and our partner agencies are tasked with and carry out every day is nothing short of extraordinary, and I want to take a moment to express my profound gratitude to the

thousands of individuals who keep our children safe. I look forward to working with all of you over the coming years, and I welcome your questions.