



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew Gounardes

## Southern Brooklyn Electeds Demand NYS Office of Children & Family Services Restore Funding for After-School Programs

ANDREW GOUNARDES August 22, 2024

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State Agency's Decision to Defund After-School Leaves 1,300 Students with No Alternatives

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*New York State Senators Andrew Gounardes, Iwen Chu, Jessica Scarcella-Spanton and Simcha Felder; and City Council Members Justin Brannan and Alexa Avilés released the following statement today in response to the New York State Office of Children & Family Services' decision to deny funding to long-time afterschool providers in Southern Brooklyn, while refusing to provide information on funding for alternative programs:*

“We’re just two weeks away from the start of a new school year, but thousands of southern Brooklyn families are scrambling to find free after-school options for their children after the Office of Children & Family Services inexplicably, irresponsibly left them hanging.

“For years, many southern Brooklyn schools have relied on longstanding partnerships with experienced local providers to offer our kids free after-school programs. Working families rely on these programs for child care and educational opportunities—for many, these programs are a lifeline that allows them to make ends meet and keep their kids safe.

“But this year, the state’s Office of Children & Family Services has decided not to fund these trusted local providers. They say bureaucratic administrative changes are to blame, and claim they’ve awarded funding to other after-school providers who can fill the gap. We first contacted OCFS to express our concerns in early June, before the end of the last school year. But just two weeks before the start of the new academic year, they *still* haven’t told us who those providers are, and whether southern Brooklyn schools will have access to them at all.

“We’ve received a deluge of panicked calls from parents and school administrators fearing the worst. Without state support, families could be on the hook for thousands of dollars in fees for after-school programs. For the many families who can’t afford that, losing access to after-school care could throw their routines and lives into chaos.

“**Families are leaving New York** because child care is expensive and burdensome. If we want this city and state to be a place where families can actually thrive, we need to provide them with resources they can rely on, not leave them in the dark. Southern Brooklyn is home to many Title 1 schools and families struggling to get by—any funding process for after-school programs must take this reality into account.

“We’re incredibly frustrated and disappointed by the state’s handling of this situation, and call on OCFS to guarantee free after-school programs for southern Brooklyn families.”

*Background:*

The [New York State Learning and Enrichment After-School Program Supports \(LEAPS\)](#) is a new funding program offered by New York State’s Office of Children & Family Services, and replaces the Advantage and Empire State after-school programs previously offered by the agency.

As a result of this change, longtime community groups that have provided after-school programming to several southern Brooklyn schools for years are no longer being awarded funding. OFCS refuses to share information about which service providers are being funded instead, or where their programs will be located.

Provider contracts are set to start on September 1st, and New York City public schools resume classes on September 5th. Despite these looming deadlines, OFCS has shared no information with local schools, families or elected officials, making it impossible to plan for the coming school year.

While OFCS’s restrictions make it difficult to know how many students could be impacted, we are currently aware of at least eleven southern Brooklyn locations—totaling approximately 1,300 slots for students—previously served by organizations including [NIA Community Services Network](#) and [FIAO](#), that are impacted: IS 228, PS 95, PS 100, PS 104, PS 121, PS 177, PS 185, PS 212, PS 216, PS 939, and PS 143Q.

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