



CITY OF NEW YORK  
**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**JEFFREY LEFRANCOIS**  
Chair

**JESSE R. BODINE**  
District Manager

February 10, 2023

David C. Banks, Chancellor  
Department of Education  
52 Chambers Street  
New York NY, 10007

Gary P. Jenkins, Commissioner  
Department of Social Service  
33 Beaver Street  
New York NY, 10004

Mitchell Katz  
President  
Health & Hospitals Corporation  
50 Water St. New York, NY 10004

**Re: Letter to DOE re Request for funding for tutoring and support services to families seeking asylum**

Dear Chancellor Banks, Commissioner Jenkins, and President Katz,

On the recommendation of its Arts, Culture, Education and Street Life (ACES) committee, Manhattan Community Board 4's (MCB4) Full Board at its regularly scheduled meeting on February 1, 2023, voted **40** in favor, **0** opposed, **0** abstaining, and **1** present but not eligible to vote, to request funding for (1) shelter-based tutoring and after-school programming (including language-skill support) for students whose families are seeking asylum in the US and (2) trauma informed cultural competency training for all staff working in the shelters with families who have arrived from outside the US.

Many public school students who recently arrived in the US and live in shelters are assigned to schools that are not within walking distance of their shelters. Instead, the students must take public school busses to get to and from school. As a result, the students can't participate in any after-school programs (including language-skill support) or tutoring offered at their schools because they must catch their busses back to their shelters.

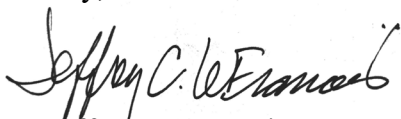
On January 9, 2023, at the ACES monthly committee meeting, we received an update about challenges facing students in temporary housing from Iris Gersten, who is a DOE Regional Manager for Students in Temporary Housing. Ms. Gersten explained that the DOE prioritizes schools with bilingual programs for students whose families are recently arrived in the US. She said that schools with bilingual programs are often quite far from the shelters available for asylum-seeking families, which is why so many students are dependent on busses that leave school as soon as classes are done.

After an informative Q&A between Ms Gersten and members of ACES, it was clear that there is a lot of interest in making sure that the shelters are properly resourced to support both the educational and language success of the students and their parents in the shelters. We recognize that shelter-based tutoring and after-school programming are complex issues that will require multiple city agencies to address funding, space-planning, rules about outside volunteers and providers allowed into the shelters, etc. But we believe that addressing the after-school educational needs of our City's newest arrivals where they live is critical to ensure their success.

Members of the ACES Committee also discussed the importance of trauma informed cultural competency training for all staff members of the shelters where asylum-seeking families are assigned. We know that the City has opened more than 70 sites in less than a year to provide shelter for recently-arrived asylum-seekers. Given the multitude of cultural norms that the asylum-seekers bring with them, the staff at shelters should be provided with trauma informed cultural competency training so that they can be sensitive to the needs of shelter residents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Please provide funding for such trauma informed cultural competency training for all shelter staff members.

We would like to commend Ms. Gersten for providing us with helpful updates about the challenges facing students in temporary housing, and advocate for (1) shelter-based tutoring and after-school programming (including language-skill support) for students whose families are seeking asylum in the US and (2) trauma informed cultural competency training for all staff working in the shelters with families who have arrived from outside the US.

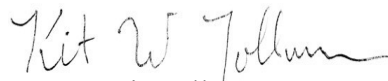
Sincerely,



Jeffery LeFrancois  
Chair  
Community Board 4



Allen Oster  
Co-Chair  
ACES Committee



Kit Tollerson  
Co-Chair  
ACES Committee

CC: Hon. Eric Adams, Mayor, City of New York  
Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough Presidents office  
Hon. Erik Bottcher, City Council.