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WILLIAM C. THOMPSON, JR.
COMPTROLLER

March 4, 2009

Honorable Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Bloomberg:

I write to express my deep concern regarding the Administration for Children's Services' (ACS) poorly administered effort to move five-year-olds out of day care centers and into public schools. My office has received a substantial number of inquiries from anxious parents who have not been adequately informed about this change and the significant impact it will have on their children and their families.

The number of inquiries we received from parents is not surprising; indeed, your administration's Preliminary Mayor's Management Report for FY 2009 reflects that the top five inquiries directed to 311 regarding ACS concern child care. What is surprising, however, is that the City does not appear to have responded to these concerns and has failed to take appropriate measures to include parents in a dialogue or even to inform them of the impact of these changes.

As you are aware, the City's effort involves the coordination of several agencies--ACS, the Department of Education (DOE) and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)--and falls under the purview of two Deputy Mayors. Yet, despite the broad involvement of a number of levels of government, it appears that this coordination failed to result in the involvement of the very families they were meant to serve. Regrettably, the current process seems most notable for its lack of transparency and the absence of community input.

As you will recall, members of my office met with your staff in the Fall of 2007 to discuss expanding pre-kindergarten slots in community-based centers in order to fulfill the goal of Universal Pre-K. At that time, your office assured us that Pre-K conversions in conventional day care centers were both worthy and logical.

It is unfortunate that the City's efforts to achieve this important goal have fallen far short of what is needed.

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First, current proposals to pull approximately 3,500 five-year-olds out of day care centers will create vacancies that, if not filled, could cause centers to close their doors--and squander those valuable resources for expanding Pre-K. A school-by-school, center-by-center analysis has yet to be performed to determine where a "swap" between kindergarten and pre-kindergarten classes might work well.

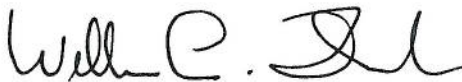
In addition, and as my office and others have pointed out many times, numerous public schools in our City are already operating at, or near, capacity. The addition of even one kindergarten class could push a school that is currently straining just below capacity into an overcrowded school. There has been no disclosure regarding the City's plans to address this issue.

Further, children being moved to the public schools from day care centers are, for the most part, entitled to full-day day care while their parents are at work. Although ACS has indicated that DYCD will provide after-school services, no detail has been provided regarding how children who are entitled to full-day child care will be prioritized after the typical kindergarten school day ends at 2:30 pm.

Making smart choices and cost effective changes in the City's child care programs is both important and sensible, particularly as our City confronts difficult economic conditions. However, significant programmatic changes must not be made without appropriate analysis and at the expense of parental and community involvement.

I urge that the City reexamine its efforts and delay this effort until these concerns have been examined and resolved.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William C. Thompson, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

William C. Thompson, Jr.