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I am Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and I thank Youth Services Committee Chair Deborah Rose and the committee for the opportunity to testify today.

I am always in favor of more youth programs. There should be afterschool opportunities in every school and programs throughout our neighborhoods. I am working hard to make that happen – by connecting schools and programs, providing small amounts of discretionary money, or advocating for more programming. In Manhattan, there are about 160 providers, running about 1,100 programs for youth of all ages. But often it is not about the sheer number of programs, but the quality. Providing services is good, but ultimately, long-term youth development programming should help our youth succeed and our communities thrive.

We have a rich history of research-based youth programming in this city, and I am pleased that Commissioner Chong has continued it: programs that provide caring relationships and engaging activities; programs that promote high expectations, offer opportunities for youth to contribute, and that provide continuity; programs that don't focus on fixing problems, but rather build on the strengths of each young person. These are the programs that can make a lasting difference.

And we know how to do it, with initiatives like Beacons – born under Mayor David Dinkins and Youth Commissioner Richard Murphy as a national model. Beacons integrate programs – family preservation, health, empowerment, or sports – for a greater effect.

Every program we fund doesn't have to provide it all. But we need to be able to identify gaps, and bring together those services, supports and opportunities that can meet the needs of our young people and help them excel. An afterschool STEM program may be a great resource for some youth, but it could serve even more youth and be more effective if it is connected to counseling, career advisement, and arts (make it STEAM!). We are always concerned that a young person might drop out of a program if he or she faces a life trauma, and we shouldn't have to scramble to find services for that youth. A good youth development program will help that young person be resilient, and integrated services will ensure proper intervention and support.

We also need to remove some of the barriers to providing youth programming. A new initiative that allows Borough Presidents the ability to waive some school usage fees for some programs is helpful, but all schools should be available for programming every afternoon and evening, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year. An open school building can host several programs in an evening, ultimately saving money for everyone. Similarly, NYCHA community spaces, senior centers,

and libraries should be used more frequently. If a senior center closes at 4pm, an evening youth program can be placed there. I know sharing space is not easy (just ask any teacher!), but it is not impossible, particularly when programs support each other and are compatible.

As my friend and former Youth Commissioner Richard Murphy pointed out, our youth spend only a small percentage of their time in school. It is an important percentage, but ultimately to ensure the well being of our young people, we need to provide adequate resources and quality programming for all young people during non-school hours. This is not as simple as homework help or midnight basketball. This is about hiring quality staff, offering a range of well-integrated opportunities, and ensuring that appropriate supports are available in all of our programs.

In my office we are analyzing the data, and seeking to ensure that existing youth programming is offered at the hours when it is most needed. We will then work to fill the gaps.