

AFFIDAVIT OF TAMARA TUCKER

STATE OF NEW YORK)
)
COUNTY OF NEW YORK) ss.:

TAMARA TUCKER, being duly sworn, deposes and says:

1. My name is Tamara Tucker. I reside at 90 La Salle Street, Apartment 7F, New York, NY 10027.
2. I am a parent of two New York City public school students, ages eight and six. My children attend P.S. 125, The Ralph Bunche School, located at 425 West 123rd Street, New York, NY 10027.
3. P.S. 125 is an elementary school that serves Pre-K through fifth grade and shares a building with Columbia Secondary School and KIPP STAR Charter Middle School.
4. In the fall of 2022, my son will be attending third grade and my daughter will be attending first grade at P.S. 125. Both children have attended P.S. 125 since Pre-K.
5. I am extremely concerned about the funding and program cuts occurring at P.S. 125. According to Class Size Matters, P.S. 125 will be losing hundreds of thousands of dollars from its budget for next year, which is a huge amount for the size of the school. Losing this amount of money will mean program cuts and likely teacher losses that will be devastating for the students’ learning experience.
6. Due to the severity of the school’s budget cuts for the upcoming school year, P.S. 125 has to break partnerships with the outside programs that provide arts and music classes to P.S. 125 students. This includes programs such as Education Through Music, Little Orchestra Society, and Studio in A School. Given that P.S. 125 does not have any

internal arts or music classes, the partnerships with these outside organizations were the only opportunity for students to attend arts and music classes.

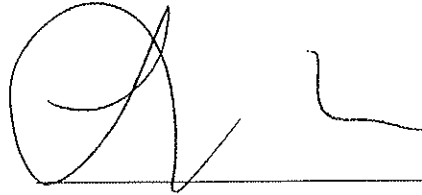
7. Arts and music programming is integral to students' enrichment and cultural education and extremely important to me as a parent. Through the arts and music classes, my children were doing African dance, engaging in holistic cultural celebrations, learning about the rise of jazz and other forms of music, and participating in student-led concerts. They loved these classes and were able to explore subject matter they did not get to discuss in their other classes in unique and creative ways. The arts and music classes have been a great way for all students to learn about diversity and inclusivity and explore different cultures.
8. Without arts and music classes, students will lose out on being immersed in an essential cultural education and a valuable expressive outlet. Art and music are crucial avenues for children to express themselves and process trauma, especially after the pandemic. Further, without an arts teacher who can come in and supplement the students' core education, substantial lessons on culture and diversity will be critically reduced and compressed to fit in with the core subjects' academic content.
9. Principal Yael Leopold, who began as full-time principal of P.S. 125 in the middle of the 2021-2022 school year, has had to make cuts to the arts and music programs in an effort to preserve the core subjects and teachers' jobs. However, given the extent of the DOE budget cuts, assistant teachers who provide essential support could still be at risk of losing their positions because the school cannot afford to keep them on. There is now barely enough money to fill vacancies and ensure that there are two teachers per grade.

10. Assistant teachers are invaluable to students' educational experience and do so much for students and the school as a whole. The assistant teachers keep track of everything and are everywhere, ensuring classes and activities run smoothly and that students are receiving the support and care they need. My son was in Kindergarten when the pandemic began and students had to go virtual. After his head teacher suffered a personal loss, his assistant teacher stepped up and assumed a dual head teacher role, keeping the children engaged and secure. The support he provided to both the head teacher and the students was amazing. It transformed the typically detached and destabilizing experience of remote learning into an inclusive and nurturing environment.
11. Additionally, this past school year my daughter's assistant teacher spoke Spanish and was able to integrate that into the class in fun and engaging ways. This teacher could also communicate with Spanish-speaking families. Through her, my daughter was learning how to speak Spanish, a highly valuable experience and skill. My daughter did not have a Spanish class outside of this, so it was her only opportunity to learn in school. I loved that both my children had a diverse group of assistant teachers to expand their perspectives.
12. The DOE justifies the budget cuts by saying there has been a drop in enrollment at P.S. 125. However, the enrollment numbers the DOE is using are incorrect. The DOE is making projections based on pandemic enrollments and estimating that enrollment in P.S. 125 is going to decline next year, when in reality its enrollment is actually rising above what it was during the past 2021-2022 school year.
13. Students will undoubtedly suffer from the enrollment increase and the budget decrease next year. Class sizes will have to increase to approximately 35 students per class next year, which is ten to fifteen students more per class than this previous year. Moreover, the

students will have no opportunity to step away from overwhelming core subject material to attend enrichment classes and will likely not receive any of the extra individualized support of an assistant teacher.

14. During the 2021-2022 school year, before quarantine guidelines changed and the vaccine mandate went into effect, there were so many absences but not enough funding for substitute teachers. This meant that many people were assuming additional roles to make sure the students' needs were being met. Parents had to volunteer to go into school and distribute lunch. The school's physical education teacher had to proctor exams and was leading P.E. classes with two or three full grades at a time. Everyone at P.S. 125 has already been stretched so thin, and it will only become more drastic in light of the budget cuts for this upcoming year.
15. Despite enrollment increasing, funding is being cut and the students are going to be the ones who bear the brunt of this poor decision. The formula that is used to calculate school budgets is fundamentally broken and does not account for the actual needs of schools. It is not a fair calculation of funding and is not benefiting students in any way.
16. Every child should have art, music, and cultural enrichment classes. These subjects are part of a well-rounded education and bring joy and diverse perspectives to children of all ages. Further, all schools should be adequately supported by teaching staff and not have to rely on a singular teacher to do the job of three or four. What is happening at P.S. 125 and all public schools across the city is not okay. Our city's children should be provided with the enrichment and support they deserve.

Dated: July 7, 2022
Brooklyn, New York



Tamara Tucker

Sworn to before me this 7th day
of July 2022


Notary Public