

HEARINGS ON THE 2022-23 EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Testimony of Jose Gonzalez, Senior Director of Data and Research

New York Communities for Change

February 16, 2022 Testimony by video

Good afternoon Senator Krueger and Assembly Member Weinstein and members of the Committee. My name is Jose Gonzalez, and I am the Senior Director of Data and Research at New York Communities for Change. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

New York Communities for Change is one of the largest grassroots, membership-driven, community based organizations in New York. NYCC members use community organizing, direct action and legislative advocacy to advance the cause of social and economic justice. Through our neighborhood chapters and issue-based committees, we work to ensure that every family throughout New York has access to quality schools, affordable housing, and good jobs.

While our state has made incredible progress over the past three years in becoming a national leader in passing progressive criminal justice reform, overhauling New York's unjust rent laws, and finally taxing the wealthiest among us who have failed to contribute what they owe, our communities are still suffering. Suffering under a system that often turns a blind eye to injustice, but that under this legislature, is finally beginning to be seen. Yet still, much more needs to be done. As is often said, "returning to normal" is not good enough.

For far too long, economic development has been a form of socialism for the rich with little regard to the public good. As our communities recover from the pandemic, the legislature has an unprecedented opportunity to finally create true economic development programs that benefit all New Yorkers and creates an economy for the many, not the few.

What does this mean? It means that rather than pouring money into corporate slush funds with little accountability or transparency, that we invest in programs that support our communities. That means investing in universal child care. It means investing in higher education and making CUNY free. It means making sure we are ready to confront the climate crisis. That should be the true meaning of economic development—

investing in the ingredients that create real economic opportunity for all of our communities.

To achieve this goal, NYCC and our 20,000 members are calling on the legislature to reject Governor Hochul's misguided two year plan to spend nearly \$10 billion at the Empire State Development Corporation, and direct the money towards investments in services that benefit the public as a whole, instead of wealthy donors.

We are also calling for a complete reform of New York's economic development program through more hearings, testimony under oath, and investigations.

But first and foremost, we are calling for this year's budget to prioritize the well being of New Yorkers by rejecting corporate subsidies and investing in communities.

Thank you again for your time.