



**New York City Council Committee on Parks & Recreation**  
**Tuesday, March 22, 2023**  
**Preliminary Budget Hearing**  
**Sherrise Palomino, Director of Advocacy & Programs, New Yorkers for Parks**

Good afternoon, my name is Sherrise Palomino and I am the Director of Advocacy and Programs at New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P). We are a founding member of the Play Fair Coalition, which includes over 400 organizations from across the city, many of which were at our rally this morning and are testifying today.

Thank you to Chair Krishnan and the Committee on Parks and Recreation for the opportunity to testify about our city's need to invest in parks. And thank you to the amazing students from Ft. Greene Prep, PS 46 and Camara Community school for their advocacy.

New York for Parks recently released our 1% for Parks Impact Report, details the decades of disinvestment in our city's parks. The report outlines how NYC invests less in our parks per capita and less as a percentage than other competing cities, and the negative impact that has had on New Yorkers and the agency. In addition, our report outlines how this historic divestment in parks has left our neighborhoods, especially those in lower income and communities of color, with chronically understaffed and underfunded parks.

Since 1980, the city budget has grown by 127%. NYPD has grown 127% and the Department of Corrections has grown by 165%. Parks has grown by just 72%.

It is time to reverse that trend. The preliminary budget proposed by the administration cuts the department by more than \$40M, reversing gains we made in the FY23 budget. Further, in the last year, the agency has lost 509 parks staff through PEG cuts and an additional 1300 parks workers that were part of the Cleaning Corp which had been federally funded until last year.

Seniors in Southeast Queens tell us that they love their park – Springfield Park. They invest time in cleaning and maintaining these spaces. However, they shouldn't be a stop gap for an understaffed agency. NYC has continued to de-prioritize parks funding leaving the agency's resources stagnant while understaffed and overworked parks employees are working tirelessly to meet the increasing demands. Additionally, the chronic lack of operations funding has led to ballooning capital costs for the department.

New Yorkers for Parks and the Play Fair Coalition are asking for 1,056 critical maintenance positions to be baselined in this year's city budget. And we are requesting that the city council re-commit to its support of the 280 essential play fair parks positions that were not funded last year. Those include 100 CPWs, 80 PEP officers, 50 gardeners, and 50 urban park rangers. We sent each council office a more detailed budget request for FY24 prior to this hearing.

We are overdue for transformative investment in our parks system – one that ensures every city park is equitably serving New Yorkers of all communities and backgrounds. It is time to allocate 1% of the city's

budget to parks. We look forward to working with the mayor, the administration, and the council to fulfill those commitments.

*For over 100 years, [New Yorkers for Parks](http://www.ny4p.org) (NY4P) has built, protected, and promoted parks and open spaces in New York City. Today, NY4P is the citywide independent organization championing quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers in all neighborhoods.*

[www.ny4p.org](http://www.ny4p.org)