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OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
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AUDIT

BUREAU OF AUDIT

April 6, 2021

By Electronic Mail

Bill de Blasio
Mayor
New York City Office of the Mayor
City Hall, 1st Floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: Special Report on the New York City Mayor's Office's Compliance with Local Law 62 of 2017 Regarding the Creation of a Disconnected Youth Task Force (# SZ21-089SL)

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

We are issuing this Special Report on the findings of our review of the New York City (City) Mayor's Office's compliance with Local Law 62 of 2017, which requires the creation of a disconnected youth task force (Task Force) composed of 25 members to examine the challenges that prevent disconnected youth from enrolling in school or being employed. In addition, Local Law 62 requires the Task Force to submit biennial reports to the Mayor and Speaker of the City Council beginning March 1, 2018 and ending on March 1, 2022. By statute, the Task Force will cease to exist after submitting its final report on March 1, 2022. The objective of this review was to determine whether the Mayor's Office has complied with these requirements of Local Law 62. Our review was performed in accordance with the responsibilities of the City Comptroller as set forth in Chapter 5, §93 of the New York City Charter.

Background

The term "disconnected youth" is defined in Local Law 62 as being youth between the ages of 16 and 24 years who are neither attending school nor employed. Disconnected youth are also sometimes referred to as "out of school and out of work" (OSOW). These vulnerable youth are often disconnected from social and economic support and consequently face many barriers to being able to live independently and support themselves. In 2019, this population represented approximately 13 percent of New York City youth aged 16 to 24.¹ Within this disconnected youth population, 18 percent resided in the Bronx, 14 percent in Brooklyn, 12 percent in Staten Island, 11 percent in Queens, and 8 percent in Manhattan.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey combined 1-Year Estimates, Public Use Microdata Sample File (2010-2019 3-year averages)

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the issues impacting disconnected youth. It has resulted in severe job losses that are concentrated in economic sectors that traditionally employ large numbers of young adults and has caused ongoing disruptions to schools and higher education. In June 2020, the Comptroller's Office released a report that showed that the unemployment rate among young people aged 16 to 24 had risen to a staggering 35 percent, up from just under a pre-pandemic rate of under 7 percent.² Under such circumstances, the issues facing disconnected youth will likely continue to worsen if not adequately addressed.

In 2017, New York City Council passed Local Law 62 that requires the Mayor's Office to establish a task force on disconnected youth within 30 days of enactment of the law, consisting of 25 members from specific backgrounds, including several City agency commissioners or their designees, advocates for disconnected youth, and youth representatives. Local Law 62 requires members of the Task Force to have conducted at least four meetings prior to March 1, 2018. Additionally, starting March 1, 2018, and no later than March 1 and every two years thereafter, the Task Force is required to submit to the Mayor and Speaker of the Council a report on disconnected youth. Specifically, these reports must:

- Include an assessment of the obstacles that prevent disconnected youth from pursuing educational opportunities or entering the workforce;
- Include an analysis and discussion on how to address those obstacles;
- Include an analysis of the education levels and skills sought by employers;
- Include a review of the quality and the type of programs that serve disconnected youth;
- Include the costs related to implementing programs for disconnected youth;
- Identify the most effective ways that disconnected youth programs can meet employer needs;
- Identify high growth industries that generate living wage jobs for disconnected youth;
- Identify ways to foster and strengthen partnerships between public and private providers that serve disconnected youth;
- Provide recommendations for better informing the public on the availability of services for disconnected youth;
- Provide recommendations for improving existing programs serving disconnected youth;
- Provide recommendations for improving data collection for disconnected youth programs and making the data publicly available;
- Provide recommendations for effective follow-up services; and
- Provide recommendations for the creation of partnerships between programs for disconnected youth and employers that can serve as a job pipeline for participants.

² *New York City Employment Situation in May: Continued Deterioration*, issued June 2020.

Findings and Recommendation

We found that the New York City Mayor’s Office did not comply with Local Law 62 of 2017. Local Law 62 required the Task Force to be formed within 30 days of enactment of the law, effectively May 25, 2017.³ However, the Mayor’s Office did not form the Task Force until February 2019, nearly two years later than required. Moreover, when finally formed, the Task Force did not have the required number of members or the required member representation. Specifically, although it consists of representatives from various City agencies, community-based organizations that serve disconnected or OSOW young adults, intermediaries, private sector leaders, and young adults who were previously OSOW, the Task Force includes only 23 of the required 25 members, does not include a representative from the Young Women’s Initiative as required, and has only two of the required three youth representatives.

Furthermore, since the Task Force was not formed until 2019, it could not and did not conduct the required minimum of four meetings prior to March 1, 2018. The Task Force’s first meeting, which was hosted by Deputy Mayor J. Phillip Thompson, did not occur until February 1, 2019. After this initial meeting, the Task Force met on 14 occasions between March 2019 and October 2019.

Additionally, the Task Force failed to issue two reports on disconnected youth by March 1, 2020, as required. The Task Force issued its first report, titled “Connecting Our Future” and labeled as the 2020 Disconnected Youth Task Force Report, on January 19, 2021, nearly three years late. Overall, we found that the report outlines a long-term strategy to keep disconnected youth on the path toward economic and career success, and that the strategy has expanded to include ways disconnected youth can overcome challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, although the report contains most of the information required by Local Law 62, it does not identify high growth industries that generate living wages for youth.⁴

Our findings are outlined in the following two tables, the first entitled “Compliance Summary” and the second entitled “Core Criteria”.

³ Local Law 62 of 2017 went into effect on April 25, 2017.

⁴ The Task Force’s “Connecting Our Future” report is available on the website of the New York City Center for Youth Employment: <https://cye.cityofnewyork.us/initiatives/disconnected-youth-task-force/>

COMPLIANCE SUMMARY		
Criteria	Compliance	Notes
The Mayor’s Office must create a Disconnected Youth Task Force (Task Force) within 30 days of the enactment of Local Law 62.	No	The Task Force should have been formed by May 25, 2017 (30 days after April 25, 2017, the date Local Law 62 went into effect). However, the Task Force was not formed until February 1, 2019—20 months later than the requirement.
The Task Force must be composed of 25 members.	No	The Task Force consists of only 23 members. In addition, it does not have a representative from the Young Women’s Initiative and has only two of the three required youth representatives.
The Task Force must meet at least 4 times prior to the issuance of its first required report due March 1, 2018.	No	The Task Force should have held four meetings between May 26, 2017 and February 28, 2018 to comply with the requirement and issue the first required report. However, the Task Force did not hold its first meeting until February 1, 2019—a delay of 20 months. The Task Force then met on 14 occasions between March 1, 2019 and October 31, 2019 to produce the first required report nearly three years (34 months) late.
The Task Force must submit biennial reports to the Mayor and the Speaker of the City Council beginning March 1, 2018. The third and final report due on March 1, 2022.	No	<p>The Task Force did not issue the required reports on disconnected youth by March 1, 2018 or March 1, 2020. The first report, titled “Connecting Our Future,” was released January 2021 and labeled as the 2020 Disconnect Task Force Report. Even if this is to be considered the biennial report that was due for March 1, 2020, this report is nine months late.</p> <p>Furthermore, since the Task Force did not produce the required 2018 report and this is the first report it did produce, this report is 34 months overdue.</p> <p>In addition, this report did not contain the required information concerning high growth industries that generate living wages for youth.</p>

We recommend that the Task Force begin to comply with Local Law 62 by adding the required representative from the Young Women's Initiative and the additional youth representative; and by developing and issuing the required report due by March 1, 2022 in a timely manner to ensure it effectively meets the needs of the City's disconnected youth.

Scope and Methodology

The scope period for this review was April 25, 2017 through March 12, 2021, the last day of our fieldwork. Our methodology for this review consisted of the following steps:

- We reviewed applicable laws, rules, policies, and procedures to determine our criteria in accordance with Local Law 62 of 2017.
- We reviewed the list of members of the Disconnected Youth Task Force to determine whether it contained the required number of members from the areas required by Local Law 62.
- We reviewed the list of meetings and attendance for the Disconnected Youth Task Force to determine whether they met at least four times prior to March 1, 2018.
- We searched for the Disconnected Youth Task Force's Local Law 62 biennial report on disconnected youth for March 1, 2018 and March 1, 2020 to determine whether it included the information required by Local Law 62.
- We reviewed the Disconnected Youth Task Force's report titled "Connecting Our Future" issued January 19, 2021, which is labeled as the 2020 Disconnected Youth Task Force Report.
- We analyzed and reviewed the Mayor's Office's website and the New York City Council's website to determine whether the biennial reports on disconnected youth due March 1, 2018 and March 1, 2020 were available.

Please let me know if you need any additional information. Any questions regarding this report may be directed to Ernestine M. Rivers, Audit Manager, at (212) 669-8847 or erivers@comptroller.nyc.gov.

Sincerely,



Marjorie Landa

c: J. Phillip Thompson, Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives
Corey Johnson, Speaker, New York Council
New York City Council Committee on Youth Services
Jeff Thamkittikasem, Director, Mayor's Office of Operations
Brady Hamed, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office of Operations
Florim Ardolli, Assistant Director, Mayor's Office of Operations