



Council Members Weprin, Gonzalez, del Carmen Arroyo, Fidler and Reyna at DJJ's FY 2010 Executive Budget Hearing.

DJJ Testifies Before City Council on the Agency's Fiscal Year 2010 Executive Budget

Commissioner Neil Hernandez testified before the New York City Council on Monday, May 18th, at the Council Chambers in City Hall, discussing the Department's Fiscal Year 2010 Executive Budget. Council Members Sara M. Gonzalez and David Weprin chaired the joint hearing of the Juvenile Justice and Finance Committees. First Deputy Commissioner Judith Pincus and Deputy Commissioner for Administration & Policy Jacqueline James also represented DJJ.

During the hearing, DJJ discussed its overall efforts and continuing commitment to the City's reform of the Juvenile Justice system. Part of this work includes ensuring that low and moderate-risk youth, which comprise a significant portion of admissions to juvenile detention each year, are spared unnecessary or lengthy stays in detention. By collaborating with the Mayor's Office, the Family Courts, and sister agencies on initiatives, such as the use of the Risk Assessment Instrument, the Weekend Arraignment Initiative and the Release to Parent Policy Initiative, DJJ will continue to assist the City in moving closer to this goal. These initiatives and others have also helped to reduce the number of youth placed in State facilities.

The Department highlighted the challenges it will face in Fiscal Year 2010, as the Office of Management and Budget announced two PEGS in 2009: a seven-percent PEG on all mayoral agencies in January, followed by a four-percent PEG in April. To achieve these savings, the agency will eliminate approximately 54 vacancies. DJJ anticipates that some of eliminated vacancies will include security positions, which could impede the enhancement of security to prevent contraband, as well as the timing of back-up responses that occur when direct childcare staff require assistance.

At the hearing, Commissioner Hernandez remarked of the future of juvenile justice reform in New York City, "DJJ will continue to do its part to help the City continue its reform of the Juvenile Justice System. Early signs show that the City is moving in a positive direction – fewer youth are spending extended periods in detention, thanks to the Weekend Arraignment. At the same time, the judiciary is making more informed decisions about detention settings for youth who need to be in detention through its usage of the Risk Assessment Instrument. Reliance on detention will be further minimized, while programs that will help to meet the many needs of court-involved youth and their families are strengthened."

