

Testimony (2:30/370 words)

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Karin Romans, and I am the Executive Director of Friends of NYC Nurse-Family Partnership.

Racial and socioeconomic disparities in maternal and infant health remain an urgent public health crisis in New York City. Pregnancy and the postpartum period are pivotal moments when targeted support can significantly influence long-term health, economic stability, and family outcomes. Addressing these disparities requires solutions that are effective and responsive to families' real-world needs.

Friends of NYC Nurse-Family Partnership strengthens outcomes for first-time, low-income moms enrolled in the City's Nurse-Family Partnership program. Our organization was intentionally established to complement the City's investment by filling critical funding and programmatic gaps that fall outside the scope of public systems.

We serve approximately 250 families annually across all five boroughs, focusing on first-time moms who are Medicaid- or WIC-eligible from pregnancy until a child is 2. Our mission centers on helping families achieve self-sufficiency and build community through four priorities: removing financial barriers, preventing family emergencies, fostering peer and professional connections, and supporting workforce and entrepreneurial pathways. We are also exploring an ambassador program for graduates. By helping families achieve stability during these critical early years, we improve outcomes for parents and future generations.

Two core programs illustrate this impact. The Heart's Desire Fund provides modest yet high-impact grants—ranging from \$500 to \$2,000—for education, credentials, childcare, books, and business startup costs. Our Emergency Fund serves as a critical stopgap when public funding cannot respond quickly or flexibly enough and is often the only emergency resource for DOHMH teams to stabilize a family.

Importantly, our support extends beyond financial assistance. Moms remain engaged through career readiness workshops, entrepreneurship training, and community-based programming designed to reduce isolation and increase long-term stability. Our all-women team includes two program graduates, ensuring lived experience informs program design. One participant, Monique Hardy, completed her education with a Heart's Desire Fund grant, authored a grief guide, and participated in our Entrepreneurship and LEAP programs. Outcomes like these demonstrate the measurable impact of our work.

This nonprofit-City partnership improves maternal and child health outcomes, strengthens workforce development, and increases engagement in Nurse-Family Partnership services—maximizing the City's investment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.