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## **Teen Leaders Release #SaveSYEP Report, Announce New Initiative to Push for More Youth Jobs**

*Teens Call for Expansion of Summer Youth Employment Program and Permanent Seat at Policy Table*

NEW YORK – [A new report](#) highlights the role that young people played in saving the NYC Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) after it was cancelled by NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio in April 2020. Thanks to an impressive campaign mounted by Teens Take Charge and other youth leaders with the support of HERE to HERE and many other organizations, the city ended up restoring nearly half the program, allowing 35,000 young people to engage in paid remote internship programs during the summer of 2020.

But, according to the teens, that was not enough. Department of Youth and Community Development data show that 102,000 young people who applied for SYEP last year were turned away. Those lost opportunities and Mayor de Blasio's unwillingness to shift more funding to youth services were the impetus for [Project 14 24](#), a new Teens Take Charge initiative that plans to push for a major expansion of youth jobs and programs in the coming months.

The teens are hosting a **virtual press conference Tuesday from 3:00-4:30PM EST** with the #SaveSYEP report co-authors, leaders of Project 14 24, and elected officials, including the Office of the Public Advocate; Council Members Carlos Menchaca, Ben Kallos and Kevin Riley; State Senator Julia Salazar; and others. Register here: <https://bit.ly/1424launch>

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The new report, [Youth Voice is Not a Box You Check Off! The Story of #SaveSYEP](#), features an array of images and stories about the youth-led campaign: their texts and group chats to mobilize; the memes and infographics they produced and which went viral; the Zoom rallies they held with elected officials; the wide range of press pieces about their leadership; and more. The

report shows the unprecedented movement they created, most of it done virtually, due to social distancing imperatives.

In addition to highlighting last year's efforts, the report calls for an expansion of SYEP this year, as a direct approach to addressing the economic and social challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and what will be more than a year of remote learning for high school students. The report also recommends that youth get a formal seat at the table in all future policy decisions about youth--not a chance to review decisions after the fact or an occasional meeting. Because youth voice is not a box that you check off!

The report's lead authors are La'Toya Beecham and Kai-Lin Kwek-Rupp, two high school students who are members of the Teens Take Charge steering committee. Beecham also serves as the Student Policy Advisor for HERE to HERE, an organization dedicated to expanding opportunities for low-income youth to reach their full potential, through an increased braiding of school and work through K-12 and postsecondary education.

Teens Take Charge, one of New York's leading student activist organizations, tackles a range of issues from school desegregation to youth employment, and more.

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"SYEP is hugely important, and students are not going to sit back and wait anymore for the city's adults to give us the opportunities we need to succeed," said **La'Toya Beecham**, an author of the report and a high school junior from the Bronx.

"Youth deserve not just a seat at the table, but need to play a major formal role in developing the policies for young people in this city. If the #SaveSYEP campaign taught us anything, it's that our voices have power, and that we need to use it," said **Kai-Lin Kwek-Rupp**, the other lead author of the report and a high school junior from Manhattan.

"New York can do much more to keep students from having to balance school and work on their own," said **Jorge Morales**, a Teens Take Charge alumni advisor. "We were happy to partially save SYEP, but it's just the first step in what needs to be a much greater expansion of support for youth employment. We can do more to ensure that work like SYEP is not only accredited, but used by our schools and teachers to round out traditional academic work, giving students a real understanding of who they want to be and what they want to do with their lives--while earning money to support their families."

"The pandemic has exposed disparities in education and employment that existed long before it, and more than ever we need to support students through programs that connect to their career and personal growth goals," said **Lazar Treschan**, Vice President at HERE to HERE and adult ally of Teens Take Charge. "Internships, career exploration, and other work-based learning activities can empower students so that they can maximize their postsecondary choices."

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**About Teens Take Charge**

Teens Take Charge is a student-led movement for educational equity in New York City. Through oral and written testimony, direct-action organizing campaigns, and relentless advocacy, we — the students of New York City — are taking our schools and futures into our hands.

<https://teenstakecharge.com>

**About HERE to HERE**

HERE to HERE enhances paths to rewarding careers for young people by uniting employers, educators, and community-based organizations beginning in The Bronx and New York City. Our vision is a thriving, inclusive economy, in The Bronx and elsewhere, driven by meaningful partnerships between young people and employers.

<https://www.heretohere.org/>