

U. S. House of Representatives
Committee on Education and Workforce
Sub- Committee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6100

May 29th, 2024

Chairman Bean, Ranking Member Bonamici, and members of the Committee,

I welcome the opportunity to speak to you today. I am an immigrant from Brazil who has lived in this country for over 20 years. My husband was born in the Soviet Union, and his family recently became immigrants when Russia invaded his hometown, Kharkiv, in Ukraine. Our countries have endured communism and military dictatorship, so we could not be more grateful to be raising our sons in America. I am here to share my experience as a New York City public school parent, an immigrant, and a New Yorker who has seen the impact of illegal immigration in our public schools and our city.

New York City has now received almost 200,000 illegal immigrants since Spring 2022, and [in the words of our Mayor, Eric Adams](#), this has had a devastating fiscal impact on our city:

"I am stuck with housing over 198,000 migrants and asylum seekers, over 38,000 children, all on taxpayers' dime. We spent over \$4 billion, and we are still getting in a large number. Last week, we got in 1,100. We have been averaging 1,000 a week for the most part, that's over 4,000 a month. There's a real strain on the city."

The New York City Independent Budget Office now estimates that this illegal immigration crisis will cost [\\$12.5 billion over the next three years](#). To deal with the fiscal impact of this crisis, the city has had to enact several spending cuts. For example, Mayor Adams canceled the training classes of 250 incoming NYC school safety agents desperately needed in our schools last October. He then said that [parents would have to volunteer to keep our schools safe](#). Our public libraries are [no longer open on Sundays](#) because of the city's immigrant budget crisis.

New York City has the country's most inefficient and inflexible public school system. Our schools [cost \\$39,006](#) per student and have a total budget of \$39.8 billion in 2024.

New York City public schools have now received over 38,000 migrant children. Besides the fiscal impact, the most devastating consequence is what this has done to destabilize our education system. Our school principals continue to receive new students without any warning. Our schools do not have enough ESL teachers and staff who speak their language and can adequately serve children who have just crossed [the world's deadliest land migration route](#). This problem cannot be solved with more funding: we can't suddenly hire more ESL-certified teachers even if New York City had unlimited funding. [A U.S. Department of Education report shows that 26 states have a shortage of ESL teachers](#).

I am an elected parent to the Community Education Council for New York City School District 2 in Manhattan and serve as its Vice-President. In my district, parents have complained about bus delays caused by the influx of new students and expressed concerns about [a migrant student who lived in a shelter in our district and shot a tourist inside a store in Times Square](#).

[New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli reviewed the Nation's Report Card](#) last year and stated: "Recent national data show student performance dropped significantly in 2022 from 2019, with New York experiencing even greater declines than the nation in fourth-grade math and reading."

FIGURE 1: Change in NAEP Average Scale Scores, New York and the US, 2019 and 2022

	Average Scale Score		Change
	2019	2022	
Grade 4 – Math			
New York	237	227	-10
U.S.	241	236	-5
Grade 4 – Reading			
New York	220	214	-6
U.S.	220	217	-3
Grade 8 – Math			
New York	280	274	-6
U.S.	282	274	-8
Grade 8 – Reading			
New York	262	262	0
U.S.	263	260	-3

Sources: [NAEP Data Explorer](#); OSC analysis

New York City public schools never had the chance to address the devastating learning loss from the pandemic lockdowns that closed our public schools and masked our children. The 2022 school year was the first “normal” year without closures and mask mandates. But the immigrant crisis has overwhelmed our public schools, and our kids’ learning recovery has suffered.

This is personal to me because my youngest son has suffered the consequences of New York City COVID mandates. He was masked most of his pre-school years when language development was crucial. His teachers were forced to be masked during storytime, and he couldn't see their faces as they spoke words. This has impacted his ability to learn to read, and he had a challenging kindergarten year despite being at an excellent public school.

We are fortunate to be able to afford a phonics tutor who has helped him catch up on reading. However, most children in New York City don’t have access to private tutors and rely on public schools to address the learning loss. We need our public schools to be laser-focused on addressing the learning loss and ensuring that this generation won't perform worse than kids who were in schools before COVID-19.

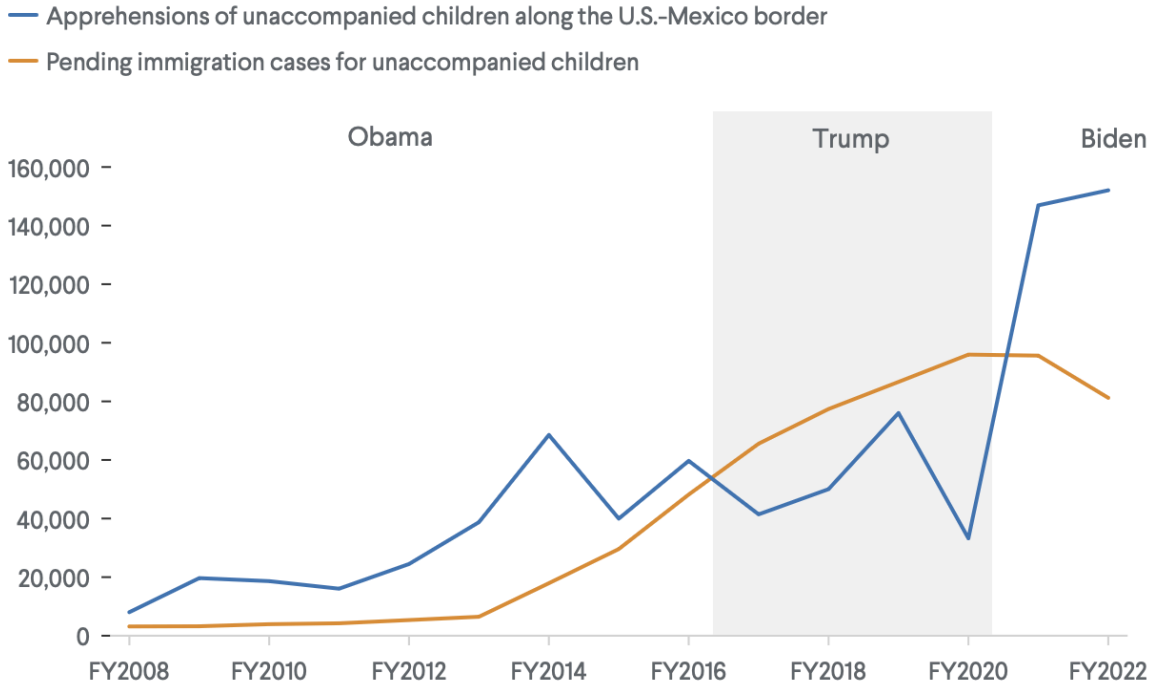
Unfortunately, New York has made it hard for the public to understand just how bad the learning loss is. Last year, the co-chairwoman of the Technical Advisory Committee, Marianne Perie, said at the Board of Regents meeting, [“We’re at this new normal. So for New York we are saying the new baseline is 2022.”](#) as she tried to explain how the new proficiency scores would be decided for state tests in grades 3-8. This is the reality: New York is changing its proficient scores in state tests, ostensibly hiding how poor our children are performing in reading and math. That is why I say we have the most inefficient public school system in America: NY has the highest per-pupil funding in the country but only produces mediocre learning outcomes for our kids.

Again, this is personal to me. What the Board of Regents is telling me is that I should expect a lower academic performance for my youngest son than I expected for my oldest. That what my oldest son could do in 3rd grade (before Covid) is different from what my youngest son will be able to do at the same grade. I will never lower my expectations for my kids and can not imagine any other parent who would accept this situation.

Three additional issues should be considered when analyzing the border crisis and its impact on New York City.

First, please consider the devastating impact on children and women who are crossing the border. [Since 2020, the number of unaccompanied children who are crossing our southern border has skyrocketed.](#)

Child Migrant Crossings Continue Rising as Case Backlog Shrinks



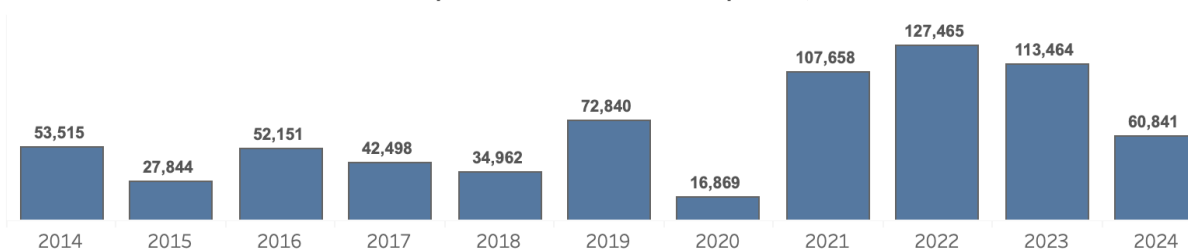
Note: Data for part of fiscal year 2020 and for fiscal years 2021 and 2022 includes children expelled under Title 42.

Sources: U.S. Customs and Border Protection; Executive Office for Immigration Review, U.S. Department of Justice.

COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS

New York State has [2 out of the top 8 counties with the highest number of unaccompanied children](#) released to sponsors in the United States.

Annual Number of Unaccompanied Children Released to Sponsors, FY 2014 to FY 2024 YTD*



Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Data Hub
<http://migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub>

The [Department of Homeland Security published a harrowing emergency](#) report in 2019 recounting the violence, sexual exploitation, trafficking, and abuse of children making this journey. Adults accompanied by a child have priority on the border for processing, which encourages child trafficking. The report shows us pictures of adults and kids who have drowned in the river. It tells in detail how smugglers are renting kids for adults to cross the border and then sending them back in a process called “recycling kids.” We have all seen videos on social media of kids being medicated to cross the border more easily. And there are plenty of examples of the horrors that wait for kids and women at the border:

- Female migrants often suffer rape, assaults, and gun violence on the path northward towards the United States ([Cleaveland & Kirsch, 2020](#)).
- "UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said in an October 2021 news release. "Week after week, more children are dying, losing their parents, or getting separated from their relatives while on this perilous journey." UNICEF estimates that half of the children who crossed in 2022 were under five years old, and at least one thousand were unaccompanied or separated." ([Council for Foreign Relations](#))
- "The physical risks along irregular migration routes are innumerable, especially for children. As well as the dangerous terrain they traverse – from jungles and rivers to railway lines and highways - children may also encounter violence, exploitation, and abuse." [UNICEF](#)

This situation has made thousands of kids easy prey for child and sex trafficking, and our [border agents are even contemplating suicide](#) because of the things they have seen at our border. [The New York Times has reported that the levels of sexual violence of migrants have risen to levels rarely seen outside war](#). Unfortunately, the US government has done nothing to discourage these horrible dynamics at our border with the immigration policies being implemented.

Second, legal immigrants are the most appalled by the current situation because we know the lengthy process that we have gone through to obtain a visa. My husband's family had to escape Ukraine in 2022 and went through extensive interviews and a vetting process to get their refugee permission to enter the United States. They were forced to escape Kharkiv when Russia bombed their apartment building. My husband's grandparents were 85 years old when they crossed the border to Poland and then traveled to Vienna. There, they patiently waited for the approval process for their visa.

Most of the 200,000 immigrants that New York City received are not like my husband's family. They are economic immigrants who decided to come to America in search of

better opportunities. In fact, [according to the UN](#) Refugee Agency, more than half of the world's refugees are women and children from Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine. And yet, [most recent immigrants coming to our city or country](#) are single men. I grew up in Latin America and understand their desire to live in a country with freedom and free markets. But we must prioritize actual refugees, who are the most vulnerable, instead of economic immigrants.

Third, follow the money. Several entities are profiting from the border crisis: from the [nonprofits serving the migrant children](#) to [a hotel in New York City owned by the Pakistani Government](#), which is being rented to house immigrants. The New York State is investigating an [emergency contract of \\$432M with DocGo](#) to provide shelter and support services. Our taxpayers also are paying [\\$325M for security services in the city's shelters](#) and [hundreds of other emergency contracts](#) - this has created [“endless opportunities for grift.” as documented by a report written by One City Rising.](#)

I am deeply grateful for all the opportunities the United States has offered me and my family. I speak here very concerned about the impact of the border crisis in our public schools and in our ability to address the devastating learning loss that NY children have endured. New York City is known for many things, but it is not a place with unlimited resources or one where we are immune to the reality of tradeoffs. What's clear, however, is that the current situation is unsustainable. Thank you for this opportunity.

Sincerely,
Danyela Souza Egorov