

New York City mayor announces draconian mid-year budget cuts, blaming increasing costs due to immigrants

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On November 16, New York City mayor Eric Adams, a Democrat, announced drastic, 5 percent budget cuts for a wide range of city agencies and services during the city's current fiscal year. This comes on top of up to five previous rounds of budget cuts for some agencies.

Laying the blame on the increase in costs due to an influx of migrants, Adams says that the city has been "abandoned" by the federal government. He cited decreased tax revenues and an end of federal pandemic aid that have reduced available resources. In fact, a report by the city comptroller, issued on December 15, 2022, shows that total projected revenues of \$104 billion for fiscal year 2023 are the highest for the last four years.

According to the Mayor, the city's current-year budget totals \$110 billion and the costs incurred as a result of the influx of migrants are projected to amount to \$11 billion. Combined with allegedly reduced revenues and loss of federal COVID aid, Adams estimates a deficit of \$7 billion in next year's budget.

Among the planned cuts are:

- Slashing the Education Department budget by more than \$1 billion over two years, resulting in reductions in funding for such programs as summer school and universal prekindergarten, and an increase in class sizes.

- Cuts to public libraries which will reportedly result in Sunday closures and other service reductions, including the purchase of new materials, organizing new programming, and continued building maintenance and repairs.

- Funding cuts to non-profit organizations will result in reductions to such services as food pantries,

domestic violence shelters, after-school programs and legal services.

- The Parks Opportunity Program, a six-month employment and job-training program in the city parks, along with another similar program, will be eliminated, with a projected savings of more than \$88 million through fiscal year 2027. The program helped 9,210 enrollees obtain jobs last fiscal year.

- City firefighters injured on the job and assigned to light duties are to be terminated.

- The City University of New York (CUNY), the city's public university, will lose approximately \$23 million.

This is only a sample of the planned cuts. Despite public protestations, the City Council, which approves the city's annual budget, has no power to review mid-year budget cuts.

In a statement, Adams warned that these announced cuts were "only the beginning."

The planned cuts have elicited widespread criticism, including from fellow Democrats, as falling hardest on the working class. Among these, the City Council speaker, Adrienne Adams, criticized the city's use of expensive, for-profit companies rather than non-profits to provide services to migrants. Others stated that the mayor is scapegoating migrants for pre-existing budget shortfalls. Such protestations are hypocritical. For example, last year, the City Council agreed on a budget that slashed an estimated \$215 million from public schools, with the actual losses being \$469 million, according to the city comptroller.

New York City, the home of the Wall Street financial center, has among the world's greatest concentration of super-wealthy individuals coupled with extreme

economic inequality. The Coalition for the Homeless reports that the city's homeless population has reached the highest levels since the Great Depression. Another study, released earlier this year, found that fully one-half of the city's population is unable to afford the present cost of living.

Despite the many severe difficulties suffered by the working class, there is no proposal by Adams to raise taxes on the city's financial and corporate elite, who are sacrosanct. The most the Mayor could muster was issuing a pathetic plea for charity during a Police Athletic League luncheon for some of the city's wealthiest residents, held at the elite Harvard Club. According to the mayor, "This is a moment where it's an all hands on deck moment."

Mayor Adams has been in office for less than two years. From the beginning, he has made it clear that his priorities lie in the ruthless defense of Wall Street and all of big business. Early in his tenure, Adams issued a "blueprint" describing his agenda. In it, there was no mention of the need for decent jobs, affordable housing or universal health care, nothing about the ongoing pandemic or about the looming wave of evictions and utility shutoffs, in short, nothing that would impinge on the power and privileges of the super-rich.

This attack on the city's working class comes at a time when Adams is facing a growing scandal regarding possible criminal violations in connection with his 2021 election campaign. The allegations involve possible illegal donations from the right-wing Turkish government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan to the Adams campaign either directly or through businessmen acting on its behalf in exchange for official favors. If ultimately proven, this example of corruption by a Democratic politician would demonstrate, yet again, the unbridgeable gulf between capitalist politicians of both bourgeois party and the interests of the working class.

The ax that is being taken to the city budget must be seen in its larger context. It is part of the wholesale assault on all social programs nationally being undertaken to redirect trillions of dollars to fund the wars in Ukraine and Gaza and preparations for war against China. Adams' futile appeals to the Biden administration for additional federal aid simply highlight that the working class will be squeezed to obtain every last penny in order to support the drive to

world war three.



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