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January 9, 2009

Honorable David A. Paterson
Governor of New York
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

Re: 30-Day Budget Amendments

Dear Governor Paterson:

The New York Children's Action Network is a network of advocates for children comprised of more than 160 coalitions, organizations and other stakeholders. We wish to offer our help and support as you develop budget amendments and throughout budget negotiations.

We are bringing to your attention a set of recommended budget amendments. These recommendations emerged from discussions in our various issue committees. While they are our highest priority concerns, they do not represent all the concerns our coalition has regarding the proposed Budget. We present the proposals below with a realistic understanding of New York's grim fiscal predicament. Yet, we know that you share New York CAN's commitment to safeguarding the most vulnerable, protecting our future investments and supporting services and programs with the strongest outcomes. Accordingly, we urge you to amend the Budget with the following changes:

Restore the 25% reduction in Healthy Families New York, one of New York's evidence-based home visiting programs that prevents child abuse and reduces costs for foster care and other child welfare services.

Restore COPS as a category of spending within the child welfare "65/35" spending, thereby assuring stable funding for a wide variety of important services including home visiting, child abuse prevention, mental health services, early childhood education training, and probation services. The elimination of COPS spending would seriously impact the most vulnerable across New York State. This cut is made worse by the fact that it is retroactive to October 2008 when expenditures have already accrued.

Transfer \$356 million in child care funding from the Flexible Fund to the Child Care Block Grant to prevent further erosion in child care funding to preserve low-income working families' access to child care subsidies.

Restore \$30 million in lost child care funding to increase the number of available subsidy slots to children in low-income working families. Restoring subsidies is essential to our economy, allowing parents to work while preparing our future workforce and allowing children to thrive.

Discontinue efforts to create a Youth Program Block Grant returning to categorical funding for the various programs. Should a reduction be warranted it should be more modest than currently proposed and should not proceed without giving communities the opportunity to plan. Further, the administration may wish to study the feasibility of some sort of block grant that assures stability of funding across the state and separates mandated from non-mandated services.

Restore the 25% reduction to the Advantage After School Program, a program that meets the needs of working parents and helps the state close its serious achievement gap.

Fully fund the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program at \$1 million in DOH and OTDA budgets. The program, matched with federal money, provides outreach and education as well as Food Stamp Program prescreening and application assistance.

Restore funding for the Homelessness Intervention Program to \$4 million, in order to assure aftercare services to help formerly homeless families and individuals remain housed and not return to shelters.

Fully fund at \$5 million the Eviction Prevention Program to prevent evictions and homelessness during this economic downturn when so many are at risk.

Restore a total of \$5.2 million in state funding for civil legal services for low-income New Yorkers in order to avert life crises, which can lead to homelessness and destabilized financial capacity.

Restore the 1% cut to the human services COLA to enable organizations time to plan how to implement such a reduction. Restore the \$9 million in funding which previously supported the preventive services COLA.

Delay implementation dates for funding cuts to allow local districts and programs to plan and prepare adequately. Some of the dates set in the Governor's Budget have already passed making it difficult for local programs and services to continue without the promise of funding. We suggest using the state's rainy day fund to help local programs and services in the near-term, giving time to make specific plans for implementation of proposed cuts.

Thank for your consideration of these recommendations. Should New York State be the recipient of new federal dollars from a stimulus package, these suggestions are priority areas for new funding. We are happy to provide more information and to discuss them further. Karen Schimke, Schuyler Center for Analysis, may be contacted with questions at (518)463-1896, x 25 or kschimke@scaany.org.

Sincerely,



Karen Schimke
Convener, New York CAN

cc: Laura Anglin
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