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April 8, 2010

Governor David Paterson
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Paterson:

On behalf of New York Children's Action Network (New York CAN), a broad-based coalition of over 190 coalitions, organizations, and individuals who are concerned about children, I am writing to bring to your attention a few issues of concern related to the lack of an on-time budget.

First and foremost, our state's vulnerable citizens will be affected most by budget extender bills. They are the people who are likely to go without needed services and supports. The state will finance essential services as the budget is negotiated; however, the services and supports offered by contract nonprofit agencies are unlikely to be included in any budget extension. The nonprofit agencies under state contract are also providing "essential" services and should be included in any budget extension as well. We urge you to honor these contracts to keep critical services available to those in need.

Contract Agencies are likely to close their doors if funding stops coming in for services. They cannot absorb additional cuts and keep programs operating; in fact, layoffs have already begun. It is entirely likely that many will close their operations down completely, some as early as April 30th.

In addition, TANF Emergency Contingency Funds and Community Services Block Grant funds cannot be released until the budget is passed. Further, as these funds are American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds, they must be expended by September 30, 2010. A late budget will condense the amount of time available to put these funds to work. An on-time budget would have provided only seven months to draw down the remainder of these funds and a late budget shortens the window even further. Any funds not expended will have to be returned to the federal government. These two funding streams go directly to supporting families and children most in need during these difficult economic times and to risk them seems unwarranted.

We are all concerned about the financial difficulty the state faces and realize there are significant differences in the Executive, Senate, and Assembly budgets which must be negotiated. Revenue raising ideas are most important in this fiscal crisis. We support the revenue proposals in the Governor's Budget and ask that you consider others offered by The Better Choice Budget Campaign.

Most importantly, we urge you to reach agreement quickly so as to lessen the effect on our children and families.

Sincerely,

Karen Schimke
Convener, New York CAN