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**Candidates Called on to “Step Up for Kids”
at State Capitol Rally on September 16th**
Part of Nationwide Event to Call Attention to Children’s Issues

This fall, candidates are doing a lot of talking – trying to find the right message to reach voters. But there’s an important voice you won’t hear this election season: *the voice of our children.*

A recent study by the child advocacy group, First Focus, showed that only one penny of every new non-defense dollar spent by the federal government over the past five years went toward children¹. Yet recent polling by Every Child Matters² shows that the majority of voters find investments in children a higher priority than tax cuts (57% of all voters; 61% of swing voters).

On Tuesday, September 16th, at 12:00 p.m., children, parents, grandparents and child advocates from across the state will gather at the Capitol steps in Albany, to call on political candidates to “Step Up for Kids” this election season. They want children’s issues and funding addressed in candidate campaign platforms.

“Step Up for Kids” events are taking place in every state across the country and in Washington, DC. on Tuesday. Locally, the event is sponsored by *New York Children’s Action Network (NYCAN)*, a statewide organization aimed at improving conditions for children in New York. The event is open to the public.

At the event, 21 children, from infant to young adult, will stand across the Capitol steps, representing every year of a child’s life and highlighting the importance of helping children at every stage of development. Preschoolers wearing “Stand Up for Me” t-shirts will also attend.

“Every candidate kisses a baby on the campaign trail, but New York’s children need more than a photo op,” said Karen Schimke, President of the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy and founder of NY CAN. “The leaders we elect in November face tough spending decisions at every level of government, but children cannot wait for brighter economic times. Their bodies and brains are developing every day. That is why we are asking candidates to “step up for kids.”

In addition to Schimke, speakers at the event include:

- **Kristin Proud:** Deputy Director of State Operations, Office of Governor David Paterson
- **Christina Felix:** Youth Power!, Families Together in NYS (*Felix is an inspiring 24-year-old who spent time in a state mental health hospital and treatment facilities. She now serves as an advocate for youth in the mental health system.*)
- **Dr. Helen Rouvelas:** Pediatric Pulmonologist and member of Docs for Tots
- **Clifford Bird:** Principal, Abram G. Lansing School in Cohoes
- **Sgt. Leonard Ricchiuti (Ret.):** Executive Director, Albany Police Athletic League

(more)

One of the goals of the “Step up for Kids” rally is to show elected officials that early intervention programs for children offer a good return on investment:

- **Starting sooner than school:** Research shows that 75% of brain growth and 85% of intellect, personality and social skills develop before a child reaches age five. And studies show that every dollar invested in early childhood education alone saves more than *seven future dollars* -- with fewer juvenile offenders in prison, fewer families on public assistance, and fewer teen pregnancies.
- **Sick kids can’t learn:** Children who are sick or in pain just can’t learn very well. For example, children in low-income families are 25% more likely to be diagnosed with cavities – *but 80% more likely not to receive treatment for those cavities*. Likewise, children with mental health and developmental issues may also struggle to get through school. Delaying the diagnosis or treatment of health, mental health or developmental conditions is not only cruel – the absence of needed care causes greater harm to the child and higher costs in the future.
- **Keeping families together keeps costs down:** In 2006, more than 157,000 reports were made to New York State regarding a concern that children were being abused or neglected. Investments in family supports such as home visiting programs have proven to reduce costs associated with the child welfare system by helping to prevent child maltreatment. A more stable home life results in cost savings by reducing the number of children removed from their families and placed into foster care.

For more information about the “Step Up for Kids” rally or to learn more about critical issues facing New York State’s children, visit: www.newyorkcan.org.

¹First Focus (www.firstfocus.net/pages/3391/)

² Every Child Matters (www.everychildmatters.org/National/Resources/Homeland-Insecurity-Report.html)

About New York CAN **(www.newyorkcan.org)**

New York CAN is a broad-based initiative, bringing together coalitions, organizations, and individuals who are concerned about issues affecting children and families. Our goal is to elevate the importance of supporting all children in New York State.

Vision: New York is a state that provides every child an opportunity to become a healthy, educated, productive, and responsible adult.

Mission: To be a unified and powerful voice to improve the lives of all New York’s children, youth and families through the promotion of adequate resources and changes in policies and practices.

Goals: 1) To mobilize public will, 2) to foster investments in children, 3) to elevate children’s issues as a priority with elected officials, administrators and candidates, and 4) to serve as a clearinghouse.