



THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Bill de Blasio – PUBLIC ADVOCATE

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

OFFICE OF COUNCIL MEMBER ANNABEL PALMA

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ****

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**PUBLIC ADVOCATE DE BLASIO, COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA HOLD
RALLY TO PROTECT NYC CHILDREN FROM ABUSE**

*Hundreds of Families, Providers and Child Advocates Rally to Save 3,000 Preventive
Service Slots to Keep NYC's Children Safe and Out of Foster Care*

New York - Public Advocate Bill de Blasio, City Council General Welfare Chair Annabel Palma, advocates and hundreds of families urged the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to stop a plan that will reduce services to prevent child abuse and neglect by 25% and jeopardize the safety of over 3,000 distressed families.

Since the tragic death of seven-year old Nixzmary Brown in January 2006, there has been a consistent increase in the number of New York City children who need services to prevent abuse or neglect. ACS' new child welfare contracts – which were recently awarded – and proposed budget cuts would reduce the City's capacity to prevent child abuse to levels lower than before the death of Brown.

Advocates estimate that ACS needs \$11 million to restore the 3,000 child preventive slots and a total of \$12.8 million to restore all of the City's proposed cuts to preventive services. If the City doesn't change its plan, the total loss is over \$35 million because the State matches all City funds by almost 2 to 1.

"The safety of our children is not expendable," said Public Advocate Bill de Blasio. "When Nixzmary Brown died we said never again, but just four years later the Mayor is proposing cuts that reverse all the progress we've made since that terrible tragedy. We cannot play budget games with the welfare of thousands of children."

“In this economic climate it is imperative that we invest in families who are struggling and do all that we can to protect children,” said Council Member Annabel Palma, Chair of the General Welfare Committee. “Preventive services, simply, help keep children from unnecessarily entering into the foster care system. By strengthening families, we strengthen communities, and by strengthening communities we strengthen our city.”

Preventive services are community-based services that strengthen and support families to prevent child abuse, neglect and the need for foster care. Preventive services cost a fraction of the price of foster care and the savings to child well-being are priceless. The average annual cost of foster care is \$36,000 per child, while the most common preventive service program costs approximately \$10,000 per family.

“After several tragic deaths of children known to ACS, preventive services were expanded to make sure that children found at risk of abuse and severe neglect could remain safely at home,” explained Jim Purcell, the CEO of the Council of Family and Child Care Agencies (COFCCA), which is an umbrella organization for most of the City’s Preventive Service Agencies. “Only two years ago, ACS was adding 1,000 more openings for families at risk. To now eliminate the preventive services currently available to 3,000 families will put thousands more children in harm’s way—resulting in more pain, more foster care, more homelessness, and ultimately more cost to the City.”

“Historically, whenever there is a highly publicized fatality in New York City the child welfare system receives an influx of resources. In between those tragedies, City budgets chip away at those resources until the next such tragedy restores those funds. No child should have to suffer so that history can repeat itself,” said Stephanie Gendell, the Associate Executive Director at Citizens’ Committee for Children. “The City must maintain these 3,000 slots so that the shortage of capacity does not lead to a senseless tragedy.”