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COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ON CHILD WELL-BEING SHOWS IMPROVEMENTS BUT PROGRESS LAGS IN HIGH-RISK COMMUNITIES

Keeping Track Of New York City's Children 2008 **Details Quality of Life for Two Million Children**

NEW YORK – *Keeping Track of New York City's Children 2008*, the most extensive data available in one place on the status of children in every city neighborhood, reports that conditions for children in New York City have improved in recent years. Yet, while progress is evident for children in every age range, and disparities between race and ethnic groups are becoming less pronounced, African-American and Latino children still face significantly greater challenges than their white and Asian peers. In addition, it is clear from the data that the concentration of risks and barriers to child well-being persist in specific communities.

“While children in New York City’s 59 community districts live in the same city, the opportunities, challenges, and risks they face are worlds apart” said Judith A. Garson, Chairman of the Board, of Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York (CCC). The data in *Keeping Track* illustrate that children living in Mott Haven and Morrisania in the Bronx and Bedford Stuyvesant in Brooklyn face greater risks than children elsewhere in the city. The daunting challenges of poverty, crime, poor schools, poor housing conditions, limited access to healthy foods, playgrounds, banks, jobs and other resources have a detrimental impact on the well-being of children in these communities. In contrast, children in Tottenville, Staten Island, or Bayside and Rego Park/Forest Hills, Queens face fewer risks than children elsewhere in the city, and benefit from better schools, safer and cleaner streets, and greater economic security.

“We know that public investments that support child well-being pay off, for example, with across-the-board improvements in prenatal care, access to health insurance, and education outcomes,” said Jennifer March-Joly, CCC’s Executive Director. “But for too many children, the community they grow up in will have a profound impact on their ability to succeed.”

Many Conditions for New York City Children are Improving:

- More children have health insurance (91% in 2005, up from 88% in 1999);
- Greater numbers of children are enrolled in early education programs (209,000 in 2006, up from 186,910 in 2003); and
- Academic achievement – including math scores, reading scores and graduation rates – is improving across all race and ethnic groups and age ranges (elementary, middle and high school).

However, Progress is Uneven and Serious Challenges Remain:

- The citywide unemployment rate fell to 4.9% in 2005-2006, the lowest in decades; while rates of unemployment in parts of the Bronx and Brooklyn are over 10%. African-Americans and Latinos in New York City also struggle with higher unemployment rates.
- Infant mortality has declined citywide (down to 5.5 deaths per 1,000 births in 2005, from 6.6 in 1999); yet, the rate for African-American infants is still nearly twice as high as the citywide rate (9.1 deaths per 1,000 births).
- The high school dropout rate decreased for students by 5.5% and improvements for African-Americans and Latino students were even greater (6.9% and 6.8%); yet, African-American and Latino children are still far more likely to drop out of high school than their white or Asian peers (19% of Latino, 15% of African-American, 9.3% of white, and 8.8% of Asian students dropped out in 2006).

Resources Essential to Well-Being Are Not Readily Available in Many Neighborhoods:

- Playgrounds and parks are plentiful in neighborhoods such as Tottenville, Staten Island – with 27 children per park acre but scarce in others, like University Heights, Bronx – with 2,070 children per park acre.
- New maps illustrate that where fruit and vegetable consumption is low, rates of obesity and diabetes are high, particularly in East and Central Harlem, the South Bronx, and North and Central Brooklyn. Data on food retail options also reveals a low concentration of supermarkets and grocery stores in these areas.
- A shortage of affordable housing is reflected in increasing numbers of households spending more than half of their income on rent (28.6% of all city households in 2005) and in the Bronx, nearly 35% of households do so.
- Many neighborhoods have limited access to financial institutions. For example, Morrisania in the Bronx has only one bank, in contrast to Murray Hill/Stuyvesant in Manhattan, which has 66 banks.

In 2004, CCC embarked on a campaign to ***Secure Every Child's Birthright*** (SECB) - to promote economic, housing, and developmental security for all children. SECB called on policy makers to go beyond short-term fixes and instead create lasting structural reforms that would positively impact child well-being. While New York City has made great progress toward these goals - with the establishment of a city Earned Income Tax Credit, the nation's first local Child Care Tax Credit, expansion of supports for newborns and additional early educational opportunities for young children, and efforts to improve access to healthy affordable food - there is much more to accomplish.

"In a weak economy, there is even greater urgency to invest in programs for all children," said Maryann Marston, CCC's Board President. "A softening economy can negatively impact the availability of public services and social supports and in turn, have a disproportionately harmful impact on children who rely heavily on these programs," added Marston. "The 2008 edition of *Keeping Track of New York City's Children* illustrates the need to be ever-conscious of the forces that impact a child's life and to be proactive about implementing strong supports and quality programs for children and their families," added March-Joly.

For more information or to schedule an interview with Jennifer March-Joly, Executive Director of CCC, please contact Alex Navarro-McKay at 646-452-5637. Complete information on *Keeping Track of New York City's Children 2008* and *Keeping Track Online* is available at www.cccnewyork.org