



For Immediate Release

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Citizens' Committee for Children of New York Calls on Albany to Expand Supports for Children and Families in the FY 2006 Budget.

New York, NY – In its 60th Year as New York's premiere multi-issue child advocacy organization, Citizens' Committee for Children (CCC) is calling on the Governor and Legislature to develop budget priorities for FY'06 that *Secure Every Child's Birthright*.

“As we begin the budget process we need to insure that solutions to reduce the struggles of working parents are part of the equation in Albany budget making,” said CCC Executive Director Gail Nayowith. “If we care about positioning New York State's well-being for tomorrow, we have an obligation as a society to share the responsibility of ensuring that all children growing up in New York are healthy, housed, educated and safe.”

With a focus on economic, housing, and developmental security, CCC calls on the Governor and the Legislature to support the following initiatives in the FY'06 budget:

Increase New York State's Earned Income Tax Credit Beyond 30% of the Federal EITC

CCC applauds the Governor's proposal to expand the state's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to single, lower income, non-custodial parents. Since 1994, the state's EITC combined with the federal EITC, has lifted over 370,000 New York State families out of poverty and provided thousands more with a refundable credit to help meet household expenses as well as invest in education, a home or business. New York is one of 17 states to provide an EITC and among them, offers the third highest credit to families. By expanding the EITC to single fathers, CCC maintains that the Governor sets a precedent for the federal government, New York City and other states to follow with their respective EITCs.

“Anything that maximizes parents' ability to work and better provide for their children is a positive development,” said CCC Chairman, Heidi Stamas. “However we urge the Legislature and the Governor to agree on an FY'06 budget proposal that goes even further.”

Deepening the value of this credit and expanding it to more New Yorkers is recommended by CCC to keep more families working, off of welfare and economically secure.

Expand Children's Mental Health Services

After many years of advocacy on behalf of children there is a beginning comment outlined in the Governor's budget to help meet the Mental Health needs of children in foster care and to prevent unnecessary psychiatric hospitalization.

Authorize New York City to Create an Affordable Housing Trust Fund and Establish a New York State Reduction Credit (STAR) for Renters

New York City's shortage of affordable housing has reached record levels with a vacancy rate of 1.54% for apartments renting for under \$500 and 2.9% for all others, signifying a severe housing crisis. As the burgeoning number of homeless families also reaches record levels, aggressive measures are needed to create more affordable housing.

"It is harder for children to thrive when they are living in overcrowded apartments, when conditions of housing are poor and when they are moving among temporary residences and shelters," said Judith A. Garson, CCC's President.

An Affordable Housing Trust Fund for New York City that benefits low-income families should be authorized by the state to stimulate development, preservation and acquisition of both low-income rentals and home ownership in New York City. Possible recurring revenue for a dedicated revenue source to support the fund include the budget surplus generated from Battery Park City and/or a newly imposed mortgage recording tax.

New York State should also pass legislation for a State School Reduction Credit (STAR) for renters statewide, earning less than \$60,000 and living in rent stabilized apartments. The state's current STAR credit and the Governor's proposed STAR Plus credit applies to homeowners only, alleviating property taxes that offset school district costs. Although renters do not pay property taxes directly, rent levels do reflect taxes paid on the real property being rented. Renters too should benefit from STAR.

Expand New York State's Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program to Serve all 4 Year-Olds Statewide and Further Expand the Program in New York City to Provide all 4 Year-Olds with a Full Day and all 3 Year-olds with a Half Day of Programming

The benefits of early education programs as they relate to academic achievement and employment stability are by now well documented. Yet in New York City, over 100,000 children under age 5 with parents that are low wage earners or receiving public assistance do not have access to early learning opportunities. CCC urges New York State to fully-fund its Universal Pre-Kindergarten program signed into law in 1997 and provide funds owed to New York City as a result of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) lawsuit, to provide all four year-olds with a full day of programming, and all three year-olds with a half-day as planned.

CCC calls upon the Governor and the Legislature to *imagine* a greater state for children and we are hoping to *inspire* action to *insure* for every child as a birthright – a life of security, opportunity and achievement," said Gail Nayowith.

For more information on CCC, please visit <http://www.kfnv.org/>. To schedule interviews, please contact Mike Morey at 914-833-7093 or mmorey@douglasgould.com.

For six decades, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc. (CCC) has convened, informed and mobilized New Yorkers to make the city a better place for children. CCC's unique approach to child advocacy is fact-based, balanced and effective. Casting light on the issues, engaging allies, fueling civic discourse, identifying improvements and envisioning alternatives has made CCC New York's leading child and family advocacy organization.