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New York City After-School System to be Cut by 50%

Providers, advocates, parents and Councilmembers fight City budget cuts that threaten the stability of after-school programming across New York City

New York, NY (January 4, 2011) – Providers and Council Members gathered at the City Hall steps today to speak out against the devastating proposed cuts to the after-school system. Providers and advocates spoke out about the harmful impact it will have on communities across the City.

In one year, New York City stands to lose over 25,000 after-school program slots for children and youth in addition to the closure of seven Beacon programs. Currently, there are 418 Out-of-school Time (OST) (after-school) programs throughout New York City serving roughly 53,000 children and youth. In September of this year, the number of programs will be dramatically reduced to 220 programs, serving only 27,000 children and youth.

The OST system was created by Mayor Bloomberg to provide high-quality after-school programs for children and youth in all five boroughs. At its peak, OST served 85,000 young people, and even at that service level there were still families on waitlists for after-school programming. Now the once largest after-school system in the nation is being completely dismantled by almost 50% in one year. After-school programs promote academic achievement, help children avoid risky behaviors such as drugs and crime, enable their parents to maintain employment, provide mentors, and put young people on paths to college and careers.

Due to continued cuts to programs and services, seven Beacon programs will have to close their doors this Fall. Beacon programs provide services for children and families as well as other community members. The impact of these closures will be difficult on families and communities that have been dependent on these services for years.

After-school programs not only provide safe havens for children while their family members are working, but they also supplement what they learn in the classroom. "We know that positive engagement of youth in their schools and communities contributes greatly to their successful social-emotional growth and academic achievement. We urge Mayor Bloomberg to reconsider proposed reductions to youth service programs, as the future of New York City demands that our young people be given these essential opportunities to succeed." said Jennifer March-Joly, Executive Director of Citizens' Committee for Children of New York.

A reduction of this magnitude impacts parents' ability to work. "Working families in New York City are facing a three o'clock crisis," said Nancy Wackstein, Executive Director of United Neighborhood Houses, New York City's federation of settlement houses and community centers. "When the school dismissal bell rings and parents are still at work, many of their elementary and middle school children will have nowhere to go. "

"Out of School Time programs act as job supports for families while also promoting work readiness among young people. We should be investing in these programs during these economically challenging times, not dismantling the system," said Michael Stoller, Executive Director of the Human Services Council.

Providers are struggling with such a crippled system. "In 2009, the City's after-school system served 85,000 children. In September of 2012, there will only be 27,000 after-school slots available citywide – slashing more than 2/3 of prior program capacity. Underprivileged students who are the majority served would be disproportionately affected at a time when we are witnessing historic cuts to other lifelines in their communities," said Richard R. Buery, Jr., President and CEO of The Children's Aid Society.

The New York City Youth Alliance called on elected officials at all levels of government throughout New York City to work together to restore this critical funding and consider the long-term and far reaching effects of these proposed cuts in services to New York City's young people and their families.

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Members of New York City Youth Alliance

The After-School Corporation ▪ Citizens' Committee for Children of New York ▪ Coalition for Asian American Children & Families ▪ The Dryfoos Group ▪ Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies ▪ Human Services Council of New York City ▪ Neighborhood Family Services Coalition ▪ The New York Immigration Coalition ▪ Partnership for After School Education ▪ UJA-Federation of New York ▪ United Neighborhood Houses of New York ▪ YMCA of Greater New York