



Testimony

New York State Executive Budget Proposals for Human Services State Fiscal Year 2019-2020

February 1, 2019

CCC is a privately supported, independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe. For 74 years, CCC has undertaken public policy research, community education and advocacy efforts to draw attention to children's needs so that we can advance budget, legislative and policy priorities that produce good outcomes for our youngest New Yorkers.

CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, nor represent a sector or workforce. We document the facts, engage and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate to ensure that all children and their families must be healthy, housed, educated and safe.

CCC recognizes the need to be fiscally prudent. That said, we are very disappointed that the State's Budget cuts and curtails services for the most vulnerable children and youth in the state, most glaringly impacting negatively the children of New York City.

CCC is deeply disappointed that the Executive Budget proposes to cut reimbursement rates to family assistance programs by 10% only in New York City. While there are several Executive Budget proposals that should be applauded such as proposed investments for prekindergarten, after-school programs, community schools, child care and continued investments in implementation of raising the age of criminal responsibility across the state, we are worried about reductions or cost shifts that eliminate or decrease funding for critical services the most vulnerable New Yorkers depend on – many of whom reside in New York City.

We urge the Legislature to negotiate a budget with the Governor that is balanced in a manner that improves the well-being of children, youth and families.

Turning specifically to the Human Services budget:

CCC is deeply concerned about the continued loss of investments in the Executive Budget proposals related to Human Services and their impact on New York City's child welfare agency, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS). The Executive Budget continues to underfund the Foster Care Block Grant failing to make up for a significant cut in FY18 of \$81M statewide. The Executive Budget also continues to fund KingGap through the Block Grant instead of the same manner as adoption subsidies thereby disincentivizing localities to use kin as placement option. The Executive Budget also continues – now for more than a decade -to reduce state reimbursements preventive services to 62% despite statute requiring a 65% state-match rate. Finally, the Executive Budget does not provide state funds to the Close to Home juvenile justice initiative, which is essential for the city's implementation of Raise the Age. All of these funding choices target New York City's Administration for Children's Services, an agency that provides services to the most vulnerable children, youth and families in the City.

Below are additional concerns we have with the Executive Budget Proposal across varies issue areas:

CHILD WELFARE

In addition, to fiscal impact to child welfare services above, we also have significant concerns about the impact of revised language related to placements of People In Need of Supervision (PINS)

- Part K of the Article VII Education, Labor, and Family Assistance (ELFA) bill reforming PINS would result in a loss of state support for PINS diversion and prevention services and dramatically restrict the use of foster care placement, such that many PINs youth would have no safe placement option.

Eliminating state resources that currently permit localities to deliver family supports, respite, and preventive and diversion services to PINS youth, would result in situations where youth needs are not met, leading to possible exploitation, safety risks, as well as contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems. Additionally, while we support the proposal to eliminate PINS detention, we urge you to reject the proposal that would limit the use of foster care placement for PINS youth. We strongly urge you to consider the impact these proposals will have on communities that are left without resources to provide children and their families with needed supports such as diversion, respite and other services or safe placement options.

We recommend amending language in the Article VII ELFA Bill to ensure that counties are reimbursed for ALL PINS prevention and diversion services through the open-ended child welfare services funding stream.

We also recommend amending language in the Article VII ELFA Bill to allow PINS youth to be placed with the Commissioner (in foster care) when the court determines it is necessary. Modifying the bill language is important to ensure the safety of youth and protect them from victimization or harm.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

We continue to be excited about raise the age implementation throughout the state and the Governors commitment to increase funding for implementation. However, we are concerned with ensuring that all counties receive the funding they need to implement the full continuum of services to raise the age.

We urge the legislature to consider the following priorities to truly build on the progress made thus far:

- **Expanding Protections for Older Youth.** New York’s Youthful Offender (“YO”) law provides the opportunity for youth under the age of 19 to have a criminal conviction substituted with a non-criminal adjudication at sentencing. The law gives judges

discretion to grant YO in more serious cases and is mandatory for first-time, low-level offenses. It also allows for reduced prison sentences and automatic record sealing. Expanding YO eligibility to young adults aged 19 and older reflects the scientific consensus around youth development, and would shield many from the worst harms of contact with the criminal justice system, including lengthy incarceration and lifelong, while opening doors for employment, education and housing. Expanding YO status should include provisions that:

- **Ending Prosecution of Children Under 12.** Children as young as 7 years old are currently arrested and processed as juvenile delinquents in Family Court. Very young children who are coming into contact with the police should be provided intensive services within the context of their family and community through the social services system. Juvenile probation, detention and placement are not developmentally appropriate responses for very young children. The State must increase the minimum age of juvenile delinquency jurisdiction to 12.
- **Funding the Continuum of Services in Youth Justice.** General funding for local youth justice services through the Supervision and Treatment Services for Juveniles Program (STSJP) program has remained flat over recent years, and as noted above, State support for local prevention has been diminished over the last decade (from 65% State share as codified in State statute to 62% in practice). To meet the needs of youth at risk for, or who have contact with the justice system, the State must increase its investments in local, community-based resources for vulnerable children.
- **Restoring State support for Close to Home and supporting RTA implementation.** Close to Home allows youth placed outside of their home as the result of juvenile delinquency proceedings to remain in small home-like environments in and near New York City. Close to Home providers utilize evidence-based models, work collaboratively with youth and their families, engage youth in pro-social community activities, and allow youth to earn education credits attending Department of Education schools. In prior years before State funding was cut, the City received more than \$30M in State matching dollars to operate a network of local residences and aftercare supports for youth in the juvenile justice system. Implementation of Raise the Age has made Close to Home even more essential, as it expands to serve additional youth through the Family Court. This includes current plans to increase the total number of Close to Home beds by 85%. The lack of State funding means that the City must direct its resources to program operation and expansion, instead of investing in other system-improvements, including increases in provider workforce compensation that would strengthen the quality and continuity of services upon which justice-involved youth rely.

FAMILY HOMELESSNESS

Today in NYC, nearly 13,000 families with 23,000 children are living in homeless shelters.¹ Addressing family homelessness in New York City will require the State and the City to be

¹ NYC Department of Homeless Services, Daily Report 1/26/18. (available at <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/dailyreport.pdf>).

partners. **CCC urge the State to increase its support to the City for addressing the homelessness crisis.**

CCC strongly supports Assembly member Hevesi's Home Stability Support proposal, which would replace existing state and local rent subsidies with a more effective payment system with cost savings in shelter costs. HSS is a statewide rental supplement for public assistance-eligible families and individuals facing eviction, currently homeless, or facing loss of housing due to domestic violence or hazardous living conditions. By keeping hundreds of thousands of at-risk people in their homes, HSS will alleviate the unsustainable financial burden currently that shelters and other stopgap measures place on the taxpayers of New York State. In addition, keeping families in their homes is the best way to mitigate the extensive social costs of homelessness and the negative impact it has on an individual's education, health and employment.

CCC strongly urges the Governor and the Legislature to include Home Stability Support in the adopted budget.

Also given that domestic violence continues to be a driving force in the state's homelessness crisis, we recommend an amendment that would establish funding for **Rapid Rehousing for Domestic Violence Survivors**. Rapid Rehousing (RRH) is a HUD-approved model which rapidly connects domestic violence survivors who are homeless or at risk of homelessness because of their abuse to safe, affordable permanent housing by providing a tailored package of services that may include time-limited financial assistance and targeted support services. The key elements of RRH are:

- Assistance with housing identification by establishing connections with landlords and helping to reduce barriers to landlord participation
- Rent and move-in assistance
- Case management and support services post-placement in permanent housing

We strongly believe that New York State should invest in this RRH model to reduce homelessness among domestic violence survivors state-wide in a variety of housing markets.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and look forward to working with you to improve outcomes for New York's children and families.