

NEW YORK STATE CHILD WELFARE COALITION



For Immediate Release:

March 14, 2018

Contact:

Elysia Murphy, (212) 673-1800 x18 emurphy@cccnewyork.org

Providers, Advocates, Legislators, and Families Urge the State to Oppose Proposed Budget Cuts that Target Child Safety and Family Well-being *Governor's Budget Targets NYC with Cuts to Child Protective Services, Preventive Services*

Family members, advocates, and providers gather in Albany today to urge New York State not to balance the State's budget by cutting services for the most vulnerable children, youth and families from New York City.

Despite the increasing need to ensure children, youth and families have access to critical preventive services in their communities amidst an opioid and homelessness crisis, and the imminent implementation of Raise the Age, the Executive Budget proposes to cut funding for the very services that ensure strong supports are in place and positive outcomes are achieved for children, youth and families.

The State and City have always had a shared commitment to providing care, support and services to children at risk of abuse or neglect. The Budget proposes maintain this commitment to all counties except the children and families in the 5 boroughs of New York City. This is a damaging proposal for New York City and sets a dangerous precedent for the State.

The Executive Budget proposes to:

- Cap and cut **New York City's** child welfare services funding stream, which includes **child protective services, preventive services** and independent living services. New York's child welfare financing structure, in place since 2002, was intended to incentivize good outcomes by capping foster care reimbursement while reimbursing counties 62% of the costs for the services that keep children and youth safe and out of foster care. New York City has leveraged this funding stream to lower child protective caseloads, decrease juvenile justice detention and placement, dramatically reduce the use of foster care, and become a national model for its continuum of high quality, effective preventive services.

"The state's proposed cap and cut to funding child protective and preventive services in New York City is shameful and undermines our successful partnership and the hard won progress we have made to improve the lives of our most vulnerable children and families. As Chair of the Committee on Children and Families, I am committed to securing much-needed funding and to ensuring that New York State continues to be a national model in providing innovative services that support all children and families, especially those who are struggling," said **Assembly Member Ellen Jaffee, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families.**

"The Executive Budget proposal to cap the State share of New York City's child welfare services and to eliminate all State funding for Close to Home puts New York City's children risk. Doing so jeopardizes child safety and increases the likelihood that more children will enter foster care. Additionally, it is unconscionable for the State to shirk its commitment to youth in Close to Home just as the system is due to triple in size with the implementation

of Raise the Age. The State budget should not be balanced by cutting services to the most vulnerable children and youth in New York City, regardless of the fiscal health of the State or the City. We must maintain our commitment to these vulnerable, youth, and families of New York City,” said **Senator Tony Avella, Chair of the Senate’s Children and Families Committee.**

“I strongly oppose the proposed cuts to child welfare and juvenile justice. These services prevent child abuse, mistreatment, and neglect. It is crucial that they receive adequate funding to properly serve and protect the children of New York,” said **Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi, Chair of the Assembly’s Social Services Committee**

“The Governor, in his budget, has proposed devastating cuts in funding for children and families who need it the most. We must continue to provide funding for close to home and the raise the age, because we know they work. We must further invest in services that help keep families together because we know they work. There are too many children living in poverty. We must make sure families have affordable access to quality childcare because parents have to work hard to make ends meet. Human services workers are educated, skilled, and deserve our support and higher wages, so they can continue to do, what they love to do – work with kids and young adults who desperately need their expertise and knowledge to overcome fear, hardships and dangers no child should have to experience. It is our responsibility to prepare our children for the future and we need adequate resources and commitments to help them, their families and ultimately our communities flourish. I stand with you today to make this happen,” said **Senator Diane Savino.**

“I want my kids to grow up to be proud of their parents and the life that we have made for them. With the support I’ve gotten, I’ve definitely become a stronger, more dedicated mom. I’m more understanding and gentle with my kids. I take out more time to listen to them and understand what they feel,” said **Mariya Kolesnichenko, a parent who has participated in preventive services.**

“The most sacred goal of government is to keep children safe and one of the best ways to do that is to strengthen and support families and communities. The state’s proposed cap and cut to funding child protective and preventive services in New York City alters the shared commitment and incentivized payment structure in a way that jeopardizes the progress and successes made in child welfare in New York City,” said **Stephanie Gendell, Associate Executive Director of Policy and Advocacy, Citizens’ Committee for Children.**

“The proposed cuts to child welfare are sweeping – from child protective and preventive services, to juvenile justice programs – and threaten to undo critical progress New York State has made in recent years. Facing ever-rising costs, New York City’s community based organizations are already struggling to survive while serving our state’s most vulnerable children and families. The services on the state’s chopping block are often the only lifelines keeping families together and giving young people who have made a mistake a second chance. It is unconscionable for the State to target New York City’s families when they need our help more than ever before,” said **Sister Paulette LoMonaco, Executive Director, Good Shepherd Services.**

“Let’s be clear, the state cap on child protective and preventive services is a cut, and the cut for NYC is absolutely horrendous,” said **Jim Purcell, CEO of the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies.** “This has been an open-ended appropriation, a statement by the State that the City and the counties can count on state support for these vital, state mandated services to keep children safe with their families with appropriate in-home services. These cuts represent the state turning its back on the very programs that have successfully lowered the foster care numbers. Similarly, the Close to Home program has been successful in engaging families and youth for good outcomes, and it does not make sense for the state to cut the funding just as it diverts more adolescents from the adult justice system.”

“NYS’s forward thinking investment in preventives services since the 1980’s has resulted in substantial reductions in foster care, improved outcomes for youth, and lower cost to taxpayers. The proposed changes to NYC preventive services funding is a serious threat and a step backward. We have to support effective and efficient services to at risk families and kids-the cap must be eliminated. Our kids deserve better,” said **William T. Gettman, Jr., CEO, Northern Rivers Family of Services.**

“Capping services designed to keep children safe and prevent child abuse and neglect, is not only dangerous and short-sighted, but fundamentally inconsistent with the State’s current initiatives. At a time when the State is investing in health initiatives that aim to strengthen families with young children, we should not leave behind children and families in, or at risk of entering, the child welfare system. We should be working across sectors to shore up systems that strengthen children and give them the building blocks for a bright future. Instead, this budget proposal would significantly restrict supports for New York’s struggling families,” said **Kate Breslin, President & CEO, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy.**

“The Governor’s shortsighted budget eliminates funding for critical preventive child welfare and juvenile justice programming, threatening NYC’s low-income children and families of color,” said **Dawne A. Mitchell, Attorney-In-Charge of the Juvenile Rights Practice at The Legal Aid Society.** “The proposed cap on preventive services funding for New York City threatens the City’s ability to keep children out of foster care and safely with their families. We implore the Governor to amend the budget to present a plan that truly works for New York’s youth and their families.”

“These preventive and protective cuts will eviscerate the successful safety-net of evidence based and evidence informed interventions that keep children safe. A safety-net and interventions that not only reduced the tax-payer cost by keeping children safe with their families, but also deeply impacted the pervasive social-justice antecedents that disproportionately hurt the poor and children of color,” said **Jeremy Kohomban, Executive Director and CEO, The Children’s Village.**

“NYC has made a critical shift to strengthening families without putting children through the trauma of being removed from home and placed in foster care. State investments in preventive services have been crucial to ensuring that our state’s most fragile families can thrive. At Rise, we see the pain of family separation and the difficulties families face repairing their relationships and rebuilding their daily lives when children come home. Children blame themselves, and they act out, fearful that their families will fail again. Services to prevent placement and to support families after foster care are so important to keep children not only safe but thriving,” said **Nora McCarthy, Director, Rise.**

“Lawyers For Children has advocated on behalf of New York City children and youth in foster care since 1984, and we are extremely concerned that the proposed cuts and changes to the child welfare funding formula will roll back over 20 years of progress. New York City’s robust system of preventive services has helped to reduce the foster care population by more than 75%, while keeping children safely in their homes, enabling reunification with their families, and breaking the cycle of abuse and neglect. The proposed cap on the State’s share of New York City’s preventive service spending will unfairly treat New York City children differently from similarly situated children throughout the state, which is unacceptable. We urge the Governor and the Legislature to continue to make critical investments proven to keep children safe, no matter their New York State zip code,” said **Karen J. Freedman, Executive Director, Lawyers For Children.**

“The strong partnership between the City and State has created unprecedented progress to improve the lives of countless children, young people and families. It is not in anyone’s interest to cap Preventive funding. The Governor deserves credit for advancing these critical initiatives. The right thing to do is to continue committing State resources to our most vulnerable,” said **Ronald Richter, Chief Executive Officer, JCCA.**

“The cap on preventive services, the complete annihilation of the close to home program funding, and the total disregard for the initial phase of raise the age are all quite counter-intuitive and counter-productive. In fact, you could make the argument that these initiatives represent the three most important and consequential policy shifts in the last 20 years in child welfare and juvenile justice,” **said Bill Baccaglini, President and CEO, The New York Founding.**

xxx