



Position Statement on Governor Cuomo's Proposed 2012-2013 Budget

Summary

The Children's Agenda recognizes that the Governor is responsible for developing a budget that is both fiscally and socially responsible and this is no easy task. To say that economic times are tight for State government is an understatement. It is especially in these tight times, though, that we must continue to invest in prevention. Preventing child abuse, learning problems, and youth crime and delinquency, is a proven way to benefit the economy and strengthen families, better ensuring that the children of New York State grow up to be healthy, productive citizens.

In the 2012-2103 budget, Governor Cuomo has made some choices that will benefit New York State's children, but some important areas have been missed.

The Children's Agenda applauds the Governor for recognizing the importance of early education by investing \$93 million in childcare preservation funds – this is vital to preserving the vital service of early education and care for young children.

We have three policy recommendations to the State for additional change to support children in the 2012-2013 budget:

1. Support the evidence-based Nurse-Family Partnership program by establishing a dedicated line item of \$5 million.
2. Ensure that Early Intervention services for children are protected by soliciting community input into system reform and, in the meantime, restore funding to 2010 levels.
3. Restore preventive and crisis dollars for youth, including \$1.15 million in Runaway and Homeless Youth Act funds, \$22.6 million to the Advantage After School Program and \$28.4 million for the Youth Development Delinquency Prevention (YDDP) and Special Delinquency Prevention Programs (SDPP).

Home Visiting

The Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program is an evidence-based model that dramatically increases children's and families' success while significantly decreasing child abuse and neglect in the community. In addition to establishing a \$5 million

dedicated line item in the 2012 budget, we support the Medicaid Redesign Team's recommendation to Governor Cuomo to make NFP a fully covered preventive service for first-time, high-risk mothers and their children.

Early Intervention

Early Intervention (EI) provides evaluations and services to infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities. Recognizing the substantial brain development during a child's first three years of life, the purpose of EI is to detect and address developmental delays as early as possible in order to reduce later special education and rehabilitation costs and maximize the potential for individuals with disabilities to be productive citizens. State funding for EI decreased by 27% from FY 2010-11 (\$230 million) to FY 2011-12 (\$167 million). This cut included a significant reduction in the reimbursement rate for EI services, putting at risk the quantity of available quality services, as well as timely access to services for vulnerable children with special needs.

Reforms included in the Executive Budget could restrict access to evaluations and timely services for young children. The Children's Agenda recommends that the State ensure that EI services for children are protected by soliciting community input into system reform. We recommend restoration of funding to 2010 levels with a year-long community engagement process on this issue to prepare for reformed funding in the 2013 budget.

Youth

The Children's Agenda is gravely concerned about the continued trend of decreasing dollars for youth, including both dollars used for positive preventive services such as after-school programming, as well as crisis services for runaway and homeless youth. We urge the Governor and State delegates to maintain current funding levels and distribution to ensure that services to this vulnerable population are not put at risk. We must ensure that there is sufficient funding for communities to provide effective, preventive services to get and keep youth on the right track, improving their life outcomes and decreasing the likelihood that they will end up in the juvenile justice system.

Runaway and Homeless Youth Services

Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) dollars provide street outreach and beds in shelters for the vulnerable homeless youth population, and communities should not have to compete for these resources. The Governor's proposed budget decreases RHYA funding by 33% in actual appropriated dollars from 2011 (\$3.5 million to \$2.35 million). We support the critical restoration of \$1.15 million.

Afterschool

We appreciate that the Extended School Day/School Violence Prevention Program dollars are maintained in the Executive Budget Proposal and support this. The Children's Agenda recommends that New York State restore after-school funding to FY 2010-11 levels, including \$22.6 million to the Advantage After School Program through the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and \$28.4 million for the Youth Development Delinquency Prevention (YDDP) and Special Delinquency Prevention Programs (SDPP) through OCFS.

Childcare

The 2012 Executive Budget maintains previous 2011 funding of \$904 million for childcare, reflecting a loss of federal funds. We thank the Governor for his commitment to maintaining 19,000 childcare slots for working families, which would have been lost had this \$93 million not been invested. However, even with this generous amount, childcare funding is \$70 million less than in FY 2009-10, and the cost of care has increased. This loss jeopardizes children's access to high-quality care, vital to their school readiness and subsequent graduation, and vital to their parents' ability to work and our economy. In particular, research documents the benefit to low-income children of high-quality childcare programs, which provide a foundation for later success in school and in life.

The Children's Agenda calls for the State to increase its investment in childcare subsidies and to begin the process of setting consistent statewide standards for eligibility, co-pays, and provider reimbursement rates.

Pre-K

The Children's Agenda supports an additional investment of \$53 million in Universal Pre-Kindergarten, as recommended by the Board of Regents. Pre-Kindergarten is essential in preparing young children for school and life.

QUALITYstarsNY (QSNY)

We support investing \$20 million in QualitystarsNY, a Quality Rating Information System that is critical to the improvement of childcare programs around the State.

QSNY is a star rating and improvement system—much like those for restaurants and hotels. Fully implemented, QSNY will provide parents with valuable tools to make good choices about early childhood programs. Equally important, it will put programs on the path of continuous quality improvement and offer assistance to those seeking to improve their rating. QSNY was created to drive current and future State investments toward quality improvements in early learning programs, a strategic approach to ensuring both public and private dollars are used most effectively and efficiently to promote better outcomes for children.