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Response to Governor Cuomo's Opportunity Agenda Kate Breslin, President and CEO, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy

Governor Cuomo presented his 2015 Opportunity Agenda noting that New York faces historically high income inequality and severe poverty in communities across the state. We all can agree that the ZIP code where a child grows up should not determine his or her chances of achieving success. But growing up in certain ZIP codes is connected to greater risk of abuse and neglect, dropping out of school, becoming homeless, and struggling financially as an adult. It is especially disheartening to hear talk of "failing schools," when in fact, our government is failing our communities, our families, and the schools that serve them.

The Governor's continued focus on regional economic revitalization is encouraging. However, if economic development is to boost opportunity for families and communities, that objective needs to be clearly identified; a promise and expectation that economic development will simply trickle down is unfounded. And solutions to revitalize struggling communities require equitable support, rather than competition among already distressed regions. This is a time to unify, not divide.