

Comparison of the NYS 2016–17 Executive Budget with Schuyler Center Policy Priorities

Schuyler Center's *First Look* is an initial analysis of New York State's 2016-17 Executive Budget as it intersects with our policy priorities. Schuyler Center staff will spend the coming days gaining a deeper understanding of the Executive Budget and its impacts. Below is an initial assessment of how the budget advances priorities that improve the health and well-being of all New Yorkers, especially those living in poverty.

Public health, health coverage, access and care

Public Health

Community Water Fluoridation Fund: The **Executive Budget includes** a \$5 million appropriation for installation or upgrading of water fluoridation equipment. This funding expands the program begun last year to strengthen the fluoridation infrastructure in New York.

Schuyler Center leads a statewide Oral Health Leadership Team which recommended this proposal. Community water fluoridation is the single most cost-effective way to improve oral health, especially for children in poverty. We applaud the Governor for including this provision in the budget to improve oral health in New York's communities.

Funding for County Public Health Departments: The **Executive Budget** does not increase the formula of either the base grant or the per-capita grant under Article 6 of the Public Health Law. Local health departments are seeking an increase in the formula to maintain a sound public health infrastructure in the State.

Health System Transformation

Adult Homes: The **Executive Budget** includes \$38 million to support the transition of adult home residents into community-based settings.

Recently, the pace of residents moving to community-based settings has begun to accelerate. While more must be done, an intentional focus from State agencies has increased the pace of transitions and the process appears to be improving.

The Executive Budget maintains funding for the Enhancing the Quality of Adult Living (EQUAL) at \$6.5 million. This money provides valuable services to residents in adult homes in the form of clothing allowances, air conditioning in residents' rooms, and computers for resident use.

Medicaid Managed Care Transition

Children's Mental Health Services: As the result of a long planning process to better meet the needs of children with significant behavioral health care issues, the **Executive Budget** includes funding for six new Medicaid services for children: crisis intervention, community psychiatric supports and treatment,

psychosocial rehabilitation services, family peer support services, youth peer training and support services, and services from other licensed practitioners. The State will be submitting a State Plan Amendment to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services seeking approval for this change.

Health Coverage

Consumer Assistance: The **Executive Budget** includes \$2.5 million for Community Health Advocates (CHA) funded through the operation of the Marketplace. This is short of the \$4 million necessary to keep this important program operating at current levels. Advocates are seeking a total of \$5.5 million to expand the program in underserved areas, restore small business services, and meet demand from the newly uninsured.

CHA programs help New Yorkers get and use health insurance. These essential programs provide assistance to New Yorkers as they enroll in and begin to use health insurance, thereby ensuring that insurance coverage translates into use of medical care, including preventive services.

Early Intervention: The **Executive Budget** once again proposes several changes to the Early Intervention program, which provides therapeutic and support services to children under the age of three who have disabilities or developmental delays. The budget briefing book identifies State savings of \$5 million in the budget year, growing to \$20 million in 2018, as well as county savings. The proposed changes would address insurance company payment for services, eligibility determinations, and the administrative component of provider rates.

Family economic security and support

Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting: The **Executive Budget** includes funding for the Nurse-Family Partnership home visitation program at \$3 million and maintains flat funding for the Healthy Families New York home visiting program at \$23,288,200. No funding was included for Parents as Teachers or the Parent Child Home Program.

Maternal, infant and early childhood home visiting is available to a small number of parents with young children in a few areas around the state. A significantly higher investment is needed if New York aims to serve all communities with families in need and endeavor to ensure the best health and social outcomes for mothers, infants and families.

Paid Family Leave Insurance: The Governor highlighted the importance of Paid Family Leave during his State of the State address, and the **Executive Budget** includes proposed legislation to implement a Paid Family Leave (PFL) program. The 12-week benefit would be available to workers to bond with a new child, care for a family member, or for circumstances eligible under the Family and Medical Leave Act pertaining to the active military duty of a spouse, child or parent. The Governor proposes to fund PFL through an employee-paid withholding, and benefits would start at 35% of a worker's weekly salary (up to 35% of the statewide average) in 2018 and increase to 50% of a worker's weekly salary (up to 50% of the statewide average) in 2021.

At first blush, the concern with this proposal is that, for a low-wage worker, a benefit equivalent to 35% or even 50% of weekly salary would leave many workers unable to cover basic expenses such as rent and utilities. The Schuyler Center is part of the statewide Paid Family Leave Coalition which advocates for a paid family leave policy to help support all New York families. We look forward to working with the Legislature to pass legislation that supports families of all incomes through paid family leave.

Earned Income Tax Credit: The **Executive Budget** does not include an increase in the State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). However, the budget does permanently extend the noncustodial EITC.

Schuyler Center recommends that the State raise the EITC to 40% of the federal benefit. The EITC is one of the best ways to “make work pay” for low-income families, and research shows that children of EITC recipients are healthier and do better in school.

Minimum Wage: The **Executive Budget** proposes phasing-in a raised minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2018 in cities with populations greater than one million (New York City), and by 2021 in the rest of the state. As proposed, the wage would not be indexed to inflation going forward.

The budget does not include funding to support the increased minimum wage for organizations providing services under State contracts. Health and human services organizations across New York State that provide services to low-income families, families involved in the child welfare system, and children, adults and seniors with disabilities have articulated grave concern about their ability to continue to serve the State’s most vulnerable residents without contract increases to allow a wage increase for workers.

Community Schools: The Governor proposes a new \$100 million investment to support the transformation of schools identified as “failing” or high needs into community schools. The funding could be used for activities including hiring a community school coordinator, before-and-after school programs, summer learning activities, and referrals/connections to medical, dental, and other social services.

Child Care Subsidies: Preliminary analysis of the **Executive Budget** indicates that child care was flat funded. However, an additional \$10 million was added to support child care provider inspections as required under the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act. However, this new support does not meet the \$90 million necessary to comply with the new requirements of the CCDBG.

We will be working closely with our partners in early care and learning in order to better understand the child care investments in the coming weeks. The cost of and need for child care continues to grow and subsidy dollars do not meet that demand. Investing in child care is essential to stabilize low-income families; it is critical that New York increase its investment.

Pre-Kindergarten: The Governor proposes \$22 million in new funding for pre-kindergarten only for three-year-olds, significantly lower than the amount needed to make pre-kindergarten universal. The Governor further proposes that any pre-kindergarten program receiving State funds and needing quality support must participate in QualityStarsNY, the State’s early childhood quality rating and improvement program, as a condition of continued receipt of State funds. The Governor’s budget proposal does not provide the significant resources that would be needed to implement this proposal, as it includes just \$2 million in new funding for QualityStarsNY.

Creation of an Empire State Pre-Kindergarten Grant Board: The Governor proposes creation of a new Empire State Pre-Kindergarten Grant Board, composed of three unpaid gubernatorial appointees and staffed by the Office of Children and Family Services. Any person with a connection to a school or pre-kindergarten program would be ineligible to participate on the Grant Board. Per the language in the Executive Budget, the Grant Board would, in the future, have approval authority over grant awards for pre-kindergarten programs.

Afterschool Programs: The **Executive Budget** reduces funding for Advantage After School by \$2 million, as compared to last year’s final budget, to \$17,255,300. Last year the Legislature added the additional \$2 million in funding.

Child welfare and juvenile justice

Child Welfare

Preventive, Protective, Independent Living, Adoption, and Aftercare Services: The **Executive Budget** appropriates \$635 million for open-ended preventive, protective, independent living, adoption, and aftercare services, maintaining the State share at 62%. The budget also includes flat funding of \$12 million for the Community Optional Preventive Services (COPS) program, continuing to limit that funding to programs that were funded when the program was cut in 2008.

Localities use open-ended preventive funding to prevent the need for foster care placements and to ensure permanency for children and youth in care. A more strategic approach would make services available further upstream, before there is any documented risk of entry into foster care. Schuyler Center urges the State to re-assume the 65% State share, setting aside the 3% restoration to be used for targeted, community-based primary prevention services to prevent child abuse and neglect, and strengthen families.

Prevention and Post-Adoption Services: The **Executive Budget** briefing book proposes to invest \$5 million in adoption assistance savings that are derived from a higher federal share of adoption assistance, into post-adoption services and prevention services to prevent children from entering foster care.

Kinship Caregiver Services: The **Executive Budget** maintains flat funding for kinship caregiver services at \$338,750. The budget also maintains flat funding for the statewide kinship navigator information and referral network at \$220,500.

Kinship caregiver programs offer important support and services to people who care for relatives' minor children outside of the formal foster care program. Programs provide information about family members' rights, support to meet children's education and health care needs, and assistance with obtaining benefits.

Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP): The **Executive Budget** continues funding KinGAP within the Foster Care Block Grant, as was done in previous budgets.

KinGAP provides relatives in certified foster care settings a permanency option when both adoption and family reunification are ruled out. Many of these families require financial assistance to continue caring for a foster child in their household; with KinGAP, kinship families can exit the foster care system and continue to receive financial support. KinGAP is an important way to promote permanency for children and youth and should be funded as such—separate, uncapped, and outside of the Foster Care Block Grant, with no reduction to the Foster Care Block Grant.

Foster Care and Higher Education: The **Executive Budget** includes \$1.5 million in funding for the Foster Youth College Success Initiative to support youth in foster care to pursue higher education. Funding for this initiative was added by the Legislature last year. It is encouraging to see that the Governor has continued funding for this important program.

The Schuyler Center is a member of the steering committee of the Fostering Success Youth Alliance, which is working to provide a realistic path to higher education for the State's youth in care.

Safe Harbor: The **Executive Budget** does not include funding for Safe Harbor, a program to support vulnerable, sexually exploited youth. Last year the Legislature restored \$3 million to support Safe Harbor.

Juvenile Justice: The **Executive Budget** includes legislation to raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction through a phased-in plan that would incrementally raise the age to 18 by January 2019, and the lower age of juvenile jurisdiction from 7 to 12 by 2018. The budget also provides funding for costs associated with raising the age, including \$110 million in capital funding for new and existing buildings and approximately \$10 million in a reappropriation for local assistance. Funding for the program is also included in the five-year proposed financial plan to correspond with the phasing-in of Raise the Age.

New York is one of only two states in the nation that continues to automatically try all 16- and 17-year-olds as adults. The Schuyler Center is a member of a statewide coalition recommending that New York create a juvenile justice system that provides opportunities for youth and advances public safety by raising the jurisdictional age. We look forward to working with the Legislature on passing legislation to comprehensively raise the age.

Other

Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative: The **Executive Budget** briefing book includes a proposal to invest \$25 million in a new program, modeled after the Rochester Anti-Poverty Task Force. The program would provide \$500,000 in planning and implementation grants for ten cities which, according to the Governor's press statement, were selected based on the concentration of poverty. The cities will also be eligible for funding, through a \$20 million grant pool, to match private funding. The ten cities include: Syracuse, Binghamton, Oneonta, Buffalo, Utica, Elmira, Jamestown, Oswego, Troy, and Albany.