

Strengthening and Supporting Families And the Child Welfare System That Serves Them: A New York State Call to Action

State Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Child Budget Recommendations *Now is the Time to Invest in Child Welfare: Not CUT Funding*

Reauthorize Child Welfare Financing to Ensure Localities Have Resources to Keep Children Safe and Promote Permanency (Social Service Law Section 153-k)

The best way to help families is to prevent child abuse and neglect by strengthening and supporting families so that children can remain safely in their homes. For those children who must come into foster care, we must have a system that provides high-quality services to children and parents and is able to promote permanency expeditiously.

- ▶ **REJECT** the Executive's proposal to **CUT** the **Foster Care Block Grant**.
 - The Executive Budget proposes to cut the Foster Care Block Grant by \$62 million
 - \$23 million is targeted solely at NYC, eliminating State reimbursement for tuition costs
 - \$39 million is statewide (including NYC) and is a reduction in the State's share for foster care
- ▶ **REJECT** the Executive's proposal to **CUT** the State's share to 0% (\$19 million) for New York City's children in Committee on Special Education Placements (CSE). Note by law the City's child welfare agency receives this cut.
- ▶ **REJECT** the Executive's proposal to use the Foster Care Block Grant for the State's share of the subsidy payments for children who left foster care to permanency through **KinGAP** (subsidized guardianship with relatives). **Remove KinGAP subsidy funding from the foster care block grant and funding it in the same manner as adoption subsidy.**
- ▶ **ACCEPT** the State's proposal to maintain open-ended reimbursement for protective, preventive, independent living and adoption administration services.
- ▶ **RESTORE** the State's share for Preventive Services back to the statutory 65% and reinvest the 3% (about \$30 million) in primary prevention. These services would not require counties to open cases, but would instead enable them to target services to high-risk families **BEFORE** the abuse or neglect ever occurred.

Better Support Foster Youth Going to College

The Foster Youth Success Initiative helps support foster youth going to college. Last year, the administration supported one cohort (\$1.5 million) and the Legislature supported one cohort (\$1.5 million), for a total of \$3 million. The Executive proposes only \$1.5 million, which only supports 1 cohort.

- ▶ **Support 3 Cohorts for the Foster Youth Success Initiative so the 2 existing cohorts can continue in the program and a 3rd cohort can be added.**
- ▶ **RESTORE \$1.5 million and ADD \$1.5 million for a total of \$4.5 million** for the Foster Youth Success Initiative, which provides comprehensive college supports for foster youth attending colleges and universities, including help with expenses and supportive services while enrolled.

Help Foster Children Achieve Permanency by Strengthening KinGAP

For children in foster care living with relatives, the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) is often the permanency plan in their best interests. It enables children to leave foster care to relatives without a termination of parental rights proceeding, and provides the relative with ongoing subsidy to care for the child (like foster care and adoption do).

- ▶ **FUND** KinGAP outside the Foster Care Block Grant, in the same manner as adoption subsidy.
- ▶ Provide the subsidy until age 21 regardless of the age at which KinGAP is finalized (like foster care and adoption subsidy).
- ▶ Use the same definition of “kin” as is used in foster care so that half-siblings are treated as a sibling unit.
- ▶ Expand KinGAP to fictive kin, meaning those who are like relatives but not related by blood (e.g. close family friends, godparents, etc.).

Prevent Homelessness

Since 1988, the Social Service Law has provided for a child welfare housing subsidy to help stabilize housing for families and youth and prevent children from entering foster care, help families when children reunify from foster care, and help youth who age out of foster care. Due to the low subsidy amount, the child welfare housing subsidy is no longer able to effectively prevent homelessness for families and youth involved with the child welfare system.

- ▶ **Pass A259/S1291 to Strengthen the Housing Subsidy Program:** To ensure the housing subsidy is better able to stabilize housing for families and youth, the State should:
 - Increase the monthly housing subsidy allowance to \$600 (from \$300);
 - Increase the upper age limit eligibility from 21 to 24 so that youth who age out of foster care at 21 can avail themselves of the subsidy for up to 3 years;
 - Ensure those receiving the housing subsidy can live with unrelated roommates.

This Child Welfare Call to Action is supported by the following organizations from throughout New York State:

Abbott House; Bronx Defenders; Brooklyn Defender Services; Center for Family Representation; Child and Family Services; Children’s Defense Fund-NY; Citizens’ Committee for Children; The Children’s Aid Society; Children’s Law Center; Children’s Village; The Coalition for Homeless Youth; Council on Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA); Court Appointed Special Advocates of New York City (CASA-NYC); Eastern Citizen Review Panel; Families Together; Forestdale; Graham Windham; Good Shepherd Services; Hillside Family of Agencies; JCCA; The Jewish Board; NYS Kinship Navigator; Lawyers For Children; Leake & Watts; The Legal Aid Society, Juvenile Rights Practice; MercyFirst; NYC Citizen Review Panel; Prevent Child Abuse, NY; NY Foundling; Rise; Northern Rivers Family of Services; Schuyler Center for Analysis & Advocacy; Sheltering Arms; Westchester Children’s Association; Western Citizen Review Panel

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