



FosteringCHAMPS.org/NY

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FAMILY FIRST TRANSITION FUND INCLUDED IN FY 2020 FINAL BUDGET: State Leaders Take Crucial First Step to Ensure that Every New York Child Has the Chance to Grow up in a Loving, Supportive Family

ALBANY – As a group of advocates, providers, families and young people impacted by the child welfare system, CHAMPS-NY applauds Governor Cuomo, Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Assembly Speaker Heastie for the inclusion of the Family First Transition Fund (the Fund) in the FY 2020 Final Budget and thank Assembly Members Jaffee, Heastie, Wright and Senator Persaud for championing this issue.

The Fund will support county efforts to strengthen, support, and expand family-based foster care – particularly kin based care – so that scarcity of appropriate family-based homes is never the reason children are placed in residential care. “This Fund,” said **Kate Breslin, President and CEO of the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, co-lead of CHAMPS-NY**, “holds the potential to transform New York children’s lives by ensuring that more of them have what we know every child needs: a family.”

“Children do best in families,” added **Jeremy Kohomban, CEO and President, The Children’s Village**. “In the great State of New York, we have more than enough families to care for all children in foster care, including children with complex needs. But we must begin treating these amazing families who step-up to be foster parents as valued partners. Group homes and institutions are needed and they can play an important role but they cannot be places where children grow-up. The key to healing is the love and belonging of family.”

The Fund is a public-private partnership that offers counties financial support to achieve the goals of a newly enacted federal law known as the Family First Prevention Services Act. The Fund also incentivizes the reinvestment of savings to keep more children safe and with family rather than being separated and placed into foster care. For the first year of the project, the final budget agreement adds at least \$3 million in public funding with the private sector pledging an additional \$600,000 in matching funds and in-kind support.

“The Family First Transition Fund is modeled on successful programs underway in Onondaga, Dutchess, and Westchester counties where they are using proven, cost-effective models to place children in foster care with loving, approved relatives,” explained **Sarah Chiles, Executive Director, Redlich Horwitz Foundation**. “The Redlich Horwitz Foundation is excited to partner with the State to do what’s best for kids and what’s best for New York: provide other NY counties the small investment funds they need to ensure more kids in foster care are raised in families.”

CHAMPS-NY advances state policy and practice ensuring that when children must enter foster care, they are placed in well-supported, family-based settings whenever possible. “In the years ahead,” said **Brad Hansen, Policy Director of Families Together in New York State, co-lead of CHAMPS-NY**, “we look forward to

strengthening outcomes for New York's children and to supporting counties' efforts to transition their child welfare practice in ways that prioritize family for children in foster care."

Here in New York, more can be done to ensure children who enter foster care are placed with a family – ideally, with kin:

- On average, in counties outside NYC, less than 75% of children separated into foster care are placed with families-compared to the national average of over 88% placed with families.
- Engaging relatives as foster parents also varies greatly around the state: while 30.5 percent of children in foster care in New York City live with relatives, in jurisdictions outside New York City, only 12.7 percent of children in foster care live with relatives.
- While residential care is needed and will continue to play a critical role in providing short-term treatment and stabilization for children in crisis, it is an expensive intervention and it cannot be a substitute for family.

"Since my time in the Assembly, when I was named Chair of the Select Committee on Foster Care, my advocacy for foster youth has ceaselessly continued," **Senator Roxanne J. Persaud, Chair of the Social Services Committee said.** "I commend the CHAMPS coalition for fighting for New York's vulnerable children, our unified voices help to ensure the best outcomes for youth placed in foster care."

"The Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition of New York, as the organization that represents foster families, is committed to working with counties and New York State to reduce the number of youth in group homes and institutions, and to ensuring that foster parents have the support they need to nurture children and youth in family-based settings." – **Richard Heyl de Ortiz, Executive Director, Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition of New York.**

"The Family First Transition Fund is the first of many steps we must take to ensure a system is in place that recognizes that children belong with family- and that families are an institution that we must invest in for our children to thrive." – **Paige Pierce, CEO, Families Together in New York State**

"We are embarking on the first of many positive changes to provide more appropriate care for vulnerable children to improve life-long outcomes. The wise investment of private and public transition funds in a thoughtful way provides the multiyear approach to support all New Yorkers. Children are our future and we must nurture and guide their growth and development." – **William Gettman, CEO, Northern Rivers Family of Services**