



January 19, 2021

As the 2021-2022 Legislative Session gets underway, we want to take this moment to thank our legislative champions for their leadership on behalf of New York families at the close of last session.

**We thank Assembly Member Hevesi, Senator Persaud for sponsoring, and Governor Cuomo for signing into law A.10513/S.8421: An Act to amend the social services law, in relation to reporting data on child welfare preventive services.** This requires the New York State Office of Children and Family Services to collect data on child welfare preventive services and submit public reports to the governor and legislature.

Community-based child welfare preventive services are an essential component of New York's capacity to strengthen families and keep them together with crucial support when they need it most. Taking this step to better understand the state of preventive services in New York will contribute to the state's efforts to advance racial equity because Black and Latinx communities are over-represented in the child welfare system and hardest-hit by the COVID-19 crisis. Better data about which families are receiving preventive services, and with what outcomes will provide the State with a critical tool for reducing these disparities. Because most CPS calls are allegations of neglect – not abuse – preventive services, particularly connecting families to economic supports, can address the root cause for concern. Understanding the availability and utilization of these supports is more important now than ever to ensure that all families across the state have access to services that help keep families together.

**We also thank Assembly Member Wright, Senator Montgomery for sponsoring, and Governor Cuomo for signing into law A.10581/S.8834: An Act to amend the family court act, in relation to the placement of a former foster care youth during a certain state of emergency.** This authorizes former foster care youth who have been discharged from foster care to return to placement during the COVID-19 state of emergency without filing a motion.

Under "normal" circumstances, young people who transition out of foster care without a family, or "age-out," face instability in housing, income, and employment. As this global health crisis continues with a second wave of rising cases, when a safe and stable home and a family are key to both individual and public health, no young person should be pushed from their home or be discharged from foster care without a family simply because they turn 21. By taking action to reach youth who have already been discharged from care, New York joins nine other states that took similar action in 2020.

Looking ahead, today's Executive Budget address marks the official start of 2021-2022 budget negotiations. As we study the Executive Budget bills in the coming days, and responsive budget bills from the Legislature, we will be looking for continued – and expanded – investment in New York children and families, including in services that strengthen families, prevent child welfare involvement, and reduce the number of young people aging out of foster care without a family.