



## Schuyler Center's *First Look* at the NYS 2021-22 Executive Budget as It Intersects with Our Policy Priorities

Schuyler Center's *First Look* is an initial assessment of New York State's 2021-22 proposed Executive Budget and how it advances priorities that improve the health and well-being of all New Yorkers, especially those living in poverty.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating for New York children and families and low-income and marginalized New Yorkers. Hundreds of thousands of additional New York children have been pushed into poverty or near poverty since March. Women in large numbers are being forced to reduce work hours or drop out of the workforce to care for children unable to attend in-person school or child care, causing ever more pressure on family economic security. Children across communities, but particularly in communities of color, immigrant, and low-income communities, are struggling to keep up with remote school due to limited internet service and a lack of devices, English Language Learning support, or support for children with disabilities.

What New York children and families need to put them on the path to recovery and success is a budget with a plan to prioritize their needs. What all New Yorkers who are low-income and struggling need is a budget with a plan that prioritizes investments that will reduce inequality and lead to a recovery that leaves no one behind.

This Executive Budget does not contain such a plan.

The headline of this Budget is that it imposes 5% "across-the-board" cuts in most areas – the antithesis of a plan. By definition, across-the-board cuts unduly harm programs with small budgets that in many cases have been underfunded for years and communities with limited capacity to raise local revenue. Such actions also lead to head-scratching proposals that are deaf to the state's current challenges. Perhaps the most illustrative is the proposal **to cut public health funding in the middle of a pandemic**. Also counter-intuitive are cuts to child welfare, including preventive services, at a time when families are facing unprecedented challenges; flat funding to child care when the sector is at its breaking point; and an elimination of an important and life-changing program that provides residents of adult homes – hit hard by COVID-19 – a voice in their own lives and access to basic necessities, like air conditioners and food.

There are some promising, important proposals. The proposed reforms to ensure broad access to telehealth could dramatically improve health outcomes for New Yorkers with disabilities, rural New Yorkers and many others who have long struggled to access health services. So, too, the proposed elimination of premiums in the Essential Plan will lead to significantly more low-income New Yorkers gaining access to health insurance which will lead to improved health and overall well-being for these New Yorkers and their families.

In short, while this Executive Budget contains some important proposals and new investments, it is not a budget that puts children and families and low-income New Yorkers first. Schuyler Center staff will spend the coming days and weeks gaining a deeper understanding of the Executive Budget and its impacts, and working to achieve a final State budget that prioritizes investing in children and families, advancing racial justice, and reducing poverty and inequality.

## CHILD WELFARE AND JUVENILE JUSTICE

### Preventive, Protective, Independent Living, Adoption, and Aftercare Services

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#### ***What's in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** proposes an appropriation of \$579.6 million for preventive, protective, independent living, adoption, and aftercare services. This is a cut of \$30.5 million (5%) from State funding for these services as compared to last year's Enacted Budget.

Like last year's Enacted Budget, this budget proposes that \$382.3 million of the preventive, protective, independent living, adoption, and aftercare services funds be first drawn from the TANF Flexible Fund for Family Services (FFFS). The requirement for localities to draw from FFFS first is effectively a \$40 million increase to the amount localities must spend on child welfare before drawing down a portion of preventive services funding from the State.

The budget once again reduces the State share for preventive, protective, independent living, adoption and aftercare services to 62% from 65% (as is written in statute).

The budget proposes to consolidate Community Optional Preventive Services (COPS) programs, currently funded at \$12.1 million, and the Supervision and Treatment Services for Juveniles Program (STSJP), currently funded at \$8.4 million. Total funds for both programs are \$16.4 million, which represents a cut of \$4.1 million (20%) from last year's Enacted Budget.

The budget proposes to require counties to establish differential response programs that serve as alternatives to Child Protective Services (CPS) for certain allegations of maltreatment. The Family Assessment Response (FAR) process is a differential response model that can be a helpful resource for families. FAR is a preventive, solution-focused option for families to partner with CPS to keep their children safely at home. Currently, 21 of the 62 counties across New York State use FAR. Enactment of this proposal would expand the use of FAR statewide by 2024.

#### ***Background***

Localities use the open-ended preventive funding stream to pay for child protective services and services for families at imminent risk of foster care to prevent children from entering, or re-entering, foster care. Counties use FFFS funding to support social services programs, including those for low-income seniors and families. The budget's proposal would cut preventive services by imposing a direct 5% reduction in funding *and* by leaving counties with fewer dollars to use to draw down preventive services. At the same time, the budget proposes continuing to reimburse counties for 62% of preventive services, rather than at the statutory 65%, as has been the case every year since 2008. COPS programs are primary prevention

services – available to families without an imminent risk of entering foster care – which include group parenting skills education, general community-wide education, school-based and “therapeutic” programs, and home visiting. STSJPs are prevention, supervision and treatment programs for youth at-risk of entering or in juvenile justice.

The State should expand its investment in primary prevention, like COPS. A more strategic approach to prevention would make services available further upstream, before there is any documented risk of entry into foster care.

**We urge the Governor and Legislature to restore the 5% cuts to preventive services; restore funds transferred from FFS to preventive services; re-assume the 65% State share, as provided in statute; reject the cuts to COPS and STSJPs; and support expanded implementation of differential response/FAR.**

## Foster Care Block Grant

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### ***What’s in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** cuts funding of the Foster Care Block Grant by \$11.2 million to \$372.3 million as compared to SFY 2020-21.

### ***Background***

Counties use the Foster Care Block Grant to pay for foster care and the Kinship Guardianship Assistance (subsidized guardianship) Program (KinGAP). A reduced block grant means that counties assume a higher share of spending for their foster care systems. This cut comes just five years after the State imposed a deep cut to the Block Grant of \$62 million in 2017-2018.

**We urge the State to restore the cuts to the Block Grant. Sufficient foster care and KinGAP funding is essential as the State prepares for full implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Prevention Act in 2021, which, among other things, requires states to strengthen and expand family-based foster care and kin options so children are not placed in congregate care settings unless clinically necessary.**

## Prevention and Post-Adoption Services

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### ***What’s in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** would invest \$8.8 million in adoption assistance savings derived from a higher federal share of adoption assistance into post-permanency services and services to prevent children from entering foster care. This would amount to a \$1.2 million increase compared to last year’s Enacted Budget.

### ***Background***

Post-permanency services are available to families after an adoption or guardianship arrangement has been finalized. These services are intended to help support families in permanency and to meet the needs of children and youth who had been in foster care.

**Schuyler Center supports this new investment.**

## Family First Transition

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### ***What's in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** proposes to fund the Family First Transition Fund at \$3 million. This would amount to level funding for the fund's third year.

### ***Background***

The Family First Prevention Services Act, which passed Congress in early 2018, fundamentally changes child welfare financing. Under the law, new requirements will be in place to limit the use of federal funding for children in group home settings as a means of encouraging states to place more children with foster families, including relatives. States will also be allowed to use some federal foster care dollars to fund evidence-based preventive services.

In the 2019-20 Enacted Budget, New York State created a Family First Transition Fund, funded at \$3 million, to support counties' efforts to recruit and support foster and kinship families in preparation for implementation of the new Family First Prevention Services Act.

Last year, using federal funds, the State created a Family First Transition Act account, appropriating \$75 million in new, one-time federal funding as follows: \$25 million directed to Family First implementation and \$50 million for programs that have expiring projects with Title IV-E waivers. The State has five years to spend these funds as it implements Family First.

**Schuyler Center supports funding for the Family First Transition Fund and recommends the funding be combined with unspent funds from last year and the allocation methodology and allowable use of funds be flexible to make sure they are useful for counties preparing for Family First implementation. Retooling could include allowing counties to draw down funds before expending them and allowing counties to join together to pool the somewhat limited resources and, for example, hire jointly for a shared position.**

## Kinship Navigator and Kinship Caregiver Services

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### ***What's in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** proposes funding for kinship caregiver services at \$322,000. This is 5% less than what the Governor proposed last year and a significant cut compared to the Enacted Budget's \$1.3 million, which included \$950,000 added by the Assembly, half of its additions compared to previous years.

The budget also proposes \$210,000 in funding for the statewide Kinship Navigator information and referral network. This is 5% less than what the Governor proposed last year and a significant cut compared to the Enacted Budget's \$320,500, which included \$100,000 added by the Assembly.

## **Background**

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

The Kinship Navigator is a statewide resource and referral network for kinship families, providing information and connections to important resources.

**The Schuyler Center urges the State to restore funding for kinship caregiver services to \$2.2 million by adding \$1.9 million and maintain funding for the Kinship Navigator Program to \$310,000 by adding \$100,000 to the Executive Budget's proposals. These are cost-effective programs which need support in the coming year.**

## **Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP)**

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### ***What's in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** proposes to continue funding KinGAP within the Foster Care Block Grant.

### **Background**

KinGAP provides relatives in certified foster care settings a permanency option when both adoption and family reunification are ruled out. Many of these families need financial assistance to continue caring for a foster child in their household; with KinGAP, kinship families can exit foster care, provide a stable, permanent home for a kin child and continue to receive financial support. KinGAP is a key way to promote permanency for children and youth.

**The Schuyler Center, along with the statewide Child Welfare Coalition and CHAMPS-NY, urge the State to support permanency by funding KinGAP as separate, uncapped, and outside of the Foster Care Block Grant, with no reduction to the Foster Care Block Grant.**

## **Foster Care and Higher Education**

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### ***What's in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** proposes \$6 million in funding for the Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYSI) to support youth in foster care who pursue higher education to graduation. This represents level funding compared to last year's Enacted Budget.

### **Background**

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

**Schuyler Center, along with our FYSA partners, urge the State to include this \$6 million in funding the final enacted budget to continue to support this successful program.**

## Juvenile Justice

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### ***What's in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** proposes \$250 million for services and expenses related to raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction, representing level funding compared to last year's Enacted Budget. Based upon language included in the statute, it is unlikely that New York City will be eligible to receive any of the funding.

### ***Background***

In 2017, New York State passed legislation to raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction. The legislation moved misdemeanors to Family Court, and created a new Youth Part of the criminal court for felonies, with the presumption that non-violent felonies would be moved down to Family Court, unless the district attorney files a motion within 30 days showing "extraordinary circumstances" that the case should remain in the Youth Part. Family Court judges will also preside over the Youth Part of the criminal court. As part of the legislation, youth are expected to be provided with rehabilitative services.

## WORKING FAMILY TAX REFORMS

### Child Tax Credit

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#### ***What's in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** contains no proposals to expand the Empire State Child Credit to include children under age four in low-income families.

#### ***Background***

New York's Empire State Child Credit provides eligible taxpayers a credit equal to 33% of the federal child tax credit at the levels that existed prior to the passage of the 2018 federal tax overhaul, or \$100 per qualifying child, whichever is greater, for children age 4 through 17. The 2020-2021 Executive Budget contained a proposal to begin to fill in this omission by extending the credit to young children (under age 4) to taxpayers with a state adjusted gross income of \$50,000 or less. This proposal was dropped from the final budget after the pandemic hit New York, and was not introduced this year.

**The Schuyler Center urges the State to expand its child tax credit to cover New York's youngest children, along with children facing deep poverty and immigrant children, and to increase the available credit as set forth in A.3146 (Hevesi).**

### Employer Provided Child Care Tax Credits

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#### ***What's in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** contains a proposal to expand a State Employer Provided Child Care Tax Credit from the current maximum of \$150,000 of qualified child care expenditures that may be claimed per year to \$500,000, and increases the credit percentages beginning in tax year 2022.

The **Executive Budget** also contains a proposal to enhance tax credits associated with the Excelsior Jobs Program, a program of Empire State Development. According to the Executive Budget Briefing Book, these enhancements will “allow for an expanded five percent Investment Tax Credit component and a credit for six percent of ongoing net child care expenditures provided by the credit recipient.”

### **Background**

New York implemented the Employer Provided Child Care Tax Credit in the 2019-2020 Budget. It closely resembles the federal Employer Provided Child Care Tax Credit. Data from other states that have created similar credits, and from the federal credit, show that employer provided child care tax credits have been underutilized. In fact, in recent years numerous states have let their employer provided child care credits lapse. It is possible the proposed expansion may increase the utility of this credit. The child care related enhancement to the Excelsior Jobs Program is a completely new proposal. In the coming weeks, Schuyler Center will be studying the specifics of both proposals to evaluate whether have been crafted to avoid the shortcomings of similar federal and other state employer child care tax credits.

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD WELL-BEING**

### **Maternal Health**

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#### ***What’s in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** proposes \$8 million to continue support for initiatives to reduce maternal mortality and improve racial disparities in pregnancy by investing in the maternal mortality review board, developing implicit racial bias training, expanding community health workers and building a data warehouse to support quality improvement activities for maternal health outcomes.

#### **Background**

Women in the United States are more likely to die from complications relating to childbirth than in many other wealthy countries. Racial disparities in maternal deaths are significant: Black mothers in New York are four times more likely to die during childbirth than White or Asian mothers. Addressing maternal health is essential to ensure the health of children and, by extension, the whole family.

**Schuyler Center supports this funding while noting the inconsistency with this addition and concurrent cuts to maternal, infant, and early childhood home visiting and Maternal Infant Community Health Collaboratives.**

### **Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting**

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#### ***What’s in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** cuts funding for Healthy Families New York by \$1.3 million to \$24.8 million. The Executive Budget cuts Nurse-Family Partnership funding by \$1.4 million compared

to the 2020-21 Enacted Budget (\$600,000 from the 2020-2021 Executive Budget proposal and \$800,000 in added legislative funding).

No funding was proposed for other evidence-based home visiting programs.

The **Executive Budget** also includes an almost 20% cut (\$369,000) to the Universal Prenatal/Postpartum Home Visiting program which provides the funding for the Maternal Infant Community Health Collaboratives (MICHC) sites around the state.

## **Background**

Maternal, infant, and early childhood home visiting, a proven strategy for improving maternal and child outcomes, is available to less than five percent of families with young children in New York State and is entirely unavailable in some areas. 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 developmental outcomes for mothers, infants, and families. During the current fiscal year, the State has held back funding allocated to programs, due to State fiscal concerns.

**Schuyler Center urges restoration of maternal, infant, and early childhood home visiting and MICHC funding. Schuyler Center recommends restoration of funding to Parent Child Plus and Parents as Teachers that was eliminated in the SFY 2020-21 Budget. Schuyler Center also urges that funding withheld to all home visiting programs be restored to ensure mothers and babies receive essential health and mental health services that are especially vital during a pandemic.**

## **Child Care**

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### **What's in the Executive Budget**

For child care subsidies, the principal means of assistance for working families to cover the high costs of quality child care, the **Executive Budget** proposes level funding of \$832 million. The State General Fund investment is \$229 million. \$388 million is drawn from federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds, with \$166.8 million of the total drawn from CCDBG funds rolled over from last year. The remaining \$214.9 million are drawn from federal TANF funds, which is \$196 million less than last year. It is not clear where the TANF funds have been shifted. Finally, New York received \$164 million in federal CARES Act COVID-19 child care stimulus funds in April 2020, and is expected to receive nearly \$450 million from the federal [Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021](#) (signed into law on December 27, 2020). The remaining CARES Act funds, along with forthcoming stimulus funds, are accounted for in a line reserved for the expenditure of additional federal funding made available to recover from public health emergencies. The Executive Budget does not set forth a plan for using these stimulus funds.

The Executive Budget briefing book describes a proposal to direct \$40 million of subsidy funds to cap maximum co-pays for families across the state to no more than 20% of family income over the federal poverty level, and \$6 million for start-up grants to help reduce child care deserts – census tracts in NYS where there are more than 50 children under age five and either

very few or no programs to serve them. These initiatives are funded by CCDBG funds reappropriated from last year, and because the overall subsidy funding is flat, may mean fewer families will be served with subsidies this year.

The **Executive Budget**, drawing upon federal CCDBG funds, provides an increase in funding for the Infant-Toddler Resource Network, up to \$7 million, which provides critical training and supports to providers serving our youngest New Yorkers, and level funding of \$5 million for QUALITYstarsNY, the state's quality rating and improvement system.

### **Background**

Currently, and for many years, child care subsidies are available for fewer than 20% of income-eligible families. In addition, high co-payments in some counties lead families to turn down subsidies because they cannot afford the co-payments.

While child care represents a significant expenditure for families, much of the child care workforce struggles to get by on low wages. Child care challenges impede parents' ability to achieve economic security, driving or keeping many working families in poverty. It also deprives young children, disproportionately from low-income families, from critical early learning opportunities.

In 2018, New York took an important step in convening a Child Care Availability Task Force. Schuyler Center participates on the task force and expects the imminent release of ambitious, comprehensive recommendations for transforming New York's child care system.

### **Schuyler Center, and the Empire State Campaign for Child Care and Winning Beginning NY – two statewide early childhood coalitions we help lead – request:**

- **The Governor release the Child Care Availability Task Force recommendations and draw from the more than \$450 million in federal child care relief funds New York has already received or promised to immediately begin to strategically implement the Task Force recommendations;**
- **The Governor and the Legislature incorporate the Task Force recommendations within the final 2021-2022 New York State Budget, and include increased investment in child care, drawing from remaining emergency federal funds, ongoing federal CCDBG, TANF, and existing and new State investments to further implement these recommendations and build toward sustainability; and**
- **The Legislature maintain the up to \$7 million proposed in the Executive Budget for the Infant-Toddler Resource Network, \$5 million for QUALITYstarsNY.**

## **Pre-Kindergarten**

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### **What's in the Executive Budget**

The **Executive Budget** proposes no new funding for pre-K, holding investment even with last year at \$850 million statewide.

## **Background**

In 2013, Governor Cuomo promised full-day pre-K for all four-year-olds. Many young children outside New York City are still waiting. A minimum of \$775 million in additional funding is necessary to implement quality pre-K programs for all children that need it, which includes funding (\$5 million) for technical assistance centers.

**Schuyler Center, along with the Ready for Kindergarten, Ready for College Campaign, Empire State Campaign for Child Care, and Winning Beginning NY – three statewide early childhood coalitions we help lead – urge New York to invest \$770 million to expand access to quality full day pre-K for all children in the state. Funding for the next pre-K expansion should include enhanced rates to meet quality standards. This includes an additional 20% set aside to support highly qualified and appropriately compensated teachers in both community programs and public schools.**

## **Early Intervention**

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### ***What's in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** proposes \$151 million to fund the Early Intervention (EI) program, a reduction of \$13.7 million from the SFY 2020-21 Budget. Changes that would achieve some of the savings include prohibiting the use of back-to-back or extended sessions on the same day. There is also a provision to allow continuation of telehealth visits after the public health emergency ends.

### **Background**

Early Intervention provides therapeutic and support services to eligible infants and toddlers under the age of three who qualify due to disabilities or developmental delays. Access to timely services is critical when delays are identified, yet even before the pandemic, data showed that one in four children did not receive mandated Early Intervention services within the required timeframe. The pandemic has disrupted service delivery, with many children missing out on evaluations and services. The number of children enrolled in EI is at its lowest point since 2013 and in June 2020, the number of providers was down 15% compared to 2019. Pre-pandemic, the percentage of children receiving timely EI services fell from 74% in 2015 to 66% in 2019.

**Schuyler Center and the Kids Can't Wait Coalition urge restoration of the cuts and urge the State to secure additional funding for EI through a covered lives assessment. The State also should conduct a comprehensive assessment of the methodology used to determine payment for all Early Intervention evaluations, services and service coordination as a step toward increasing rates by 10%.**

## Afterschool Programs

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### ***What's in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** again proposes \$28,041,000 for Advantage After School, \$5 million less than last year's final budget of \$33 million. If the funding is not restored, 2,500 to 5,000 children will lose their current Advantage After School programs. The Executive Proposal provides level funding for the Empire State After School Program.

### ***Background***

High-quality afterschool programs have been shown to help close the achievement gap for low-income children and enable families to achieve economic stability.

**Schuyler Center urges the Legislature to restore \$5 million to the Advantage After School Program; include budget language that provides flexibility for programs to adapt in times of an emergency; and include funding of \$250,000 for the NYS Network for Youth Success to sustain the mobilization and coordination of high-quality expanded learning programs to help afterschool programs respond adequately to family needs.**

## **PUBLIC HEALTH, HEALTH COVERAGE, ACCESS AND CARE**

### Health Coverage

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#### ***What's in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** would eliminate premiums for Essential Plan coverage for 400,000 New Yorkers earning between \$39,300 and \$52,400 for a family of four. It is estimated that with this change, an additional 100,000 people would enroll in the Essential Plan.

#### ***Background***

New York launched The Essential Plan in 2016 as an affordable option for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers. Over 800,000 people are currently enrolled. Removing premiums will encourage additional participation in the program and reduce the number of the uninsured adults.

**Schuyler Center supports this important proposal to increase coverage.**

### Telehealth

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#### ***What's in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** includes language to codify a number of reforms enacted by the State during the pandemic that expanded access to telehealth services. The provisions would allow individuals to receive telehealth services wherever they are located, promote interoperability and health information exchange through the Statewide Health Information Network, create an interstate licensure program with other Northeast states to support telehealth access for

specialties with historical access issues. It also would require health plans to offer a network adequate to meet the telehealth needs of insured individuals and require providers to disclose whether they offer telehealth services.

### ***Background***

New York enacted broad changes to modernize telehealth regulations to expand access to critical medical, behavioral and dental health services during the pandemic. This includes many services that are essential for maternal and child health when people were not able to travel to an office for care.

**Schuyler Center strongly supports expanding access to telehealth services and the technology families need to use it, with attention to privacy issues and quality of care.**

## **Local Public Health Funding**

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### ***What's in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** reduces reimbursement for the General Public Health Work (GPHW) program, which reflects a reduction of almost \$18 million to the City of New York. The Executive does not propose reducing GPHW for other county health departments.

### ***Background***

Local public health departments are essential infrastructure to protecting the health of communities – including preparing and responding to infectious diseases such as COVID-19. Public health programs maintain the health of populations and provide important services, such as maternal and child health programs, teen pregnancy prevention, tobacco control and disease prevention.

**Schuyler Center opposes cuts to public health, especially during a pandemic when resources at local county health departments are at capacity. New York should be strengthening public health – not eroding the programs and expertise needed to respond to a crisis and maintain other critical public health functions.**

## **Medicaid**

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### ***What's in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** extends the Medicaid spending cap for an additional two years.

### ***Background***

The Medicaid spending cap was put in place in 2011, as a mechanism to instill discipline in Medicaid spending. Efforts to keep expenditures within the self-imposed cap have resulted in reductions particularly affecting Medicaid enrollees who have disabilities and are in need of home health services and people who rely on safety-net providers.

**Schuyler Center opposes the extension of the Medicaid spending cap.**

## Center for Health Workforce Studies

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### ***What's in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** does not restore critical funding (\$148,000) for the Center for Health Workforce Studies (CHWS) that was eliminated in the SFY 2020-21 Budget.

### ***Background***

The health workforce is a vital part of New York's health care delivery system. Efforts to improve the quality of health services and expand access to care depend on the availability of an adequate supply of appropriately trained health workers. It is particularly critical now to understand the availability of health professionals in response to the pandemic and to analyze providers of behavioral health to determine unmet need.

**Schuyler Center urges that funding for the CHWS be included in the SFY 2021-22 Budget to ensure that New York has the data necessary to develop the right workforce for a changing health care landscape.**

## Adult Homes

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### ***What's in the Executive Budget***

The **Executive Budget** eliminates the Enhanced Quality of Adult Living (EQUAL) Program (\$6.5 million). EQUAL provides adult home residents with services and programs that improve their quality of life. These include clothing allowances, air conditioners for resident rooms, improved food choices, capital improvements, and other items residents decide are important.

The budget also eliminates (zeroes out) adult home advocacy funding of \$230,000.

### ***Background***

Adult home residents are low-income adults, many of whom struggle with mental and other health concerns. The EQUAL program and advocacy funding commenced more than a decade ago to help remediate what are often substandard – or worse – living conditions in adult homes and lack of basic necessities. During the height of the pandemic in New York City, residents died as homes went without PPE or basic safety protections. These modest programs have made incremental, yet critical improvements in the quality of life for adult home residents. EQUAL enables adult home residents to identify specific needs, such as clothing, coats, air conditioners for resident rooms, better food, and other items. Core to the EQUAL funding is a requirement that adult home residents have a voice in how adult home operators spend these funds.

The advocacy budget funds four community and legal services organizations to help ensure that residents know their rights and have advocates protecting their exercise of those rights.

**The Schuyler Center and NYS Coalition for Adult Home Reform strongly oppose the cruel elimination of both of these funding streams. New York State needs to make systemic improvements in adult home regulation and oversight, not cut bare funding that helps protect adult home residents, give them voice, and provide them with a minimally decent quality of life.**

## **About the budget process**

The Governor's Executive Budget proposal was released on Tuesday, January 18, 2021.

### **What happens next?**

- ✓ The State constitution allows the governor to submit revisions to the budget within 30 days of submitting the budget to the legislature (referred to as 30-day amendments).
- ✓ The Senate and Assembly hold a series of joint legislative hearings on the governor's proposed budget.
- ✓ In early to mid-March, each house of the legislature presents and passes its own version of the budget, accepting, rejecting, or amending items in the governor's proposed budget.
- ✓ An agreement on the final budget should be reached by April 1<sup>st</sup>, when the new state fiscal year will begin. The Cuomo Administration and legislature have been committed to, and successful in, securing passage of on-time budgets.

### **Budget legislation includes:**

Appropriations bills: These contain the line-item appropriations. The legislature may not alter appropriations bills except to reduce or strike-out appropriations, or to add distinct, separate items ("legislative adds"). The governor can line-item veto legislative additions (but not reductions or eliminations or provisions that the legislature did not alter).

Article VII bills: These include statutory provisions necessary to implement the budget as proposed. These bills are treated like any other legislation, and can be accepted or amended by the legislature, and approved or vetoed by the governor.