MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT
S.5326/A.2807

The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy urges New York’s Legislature to include in the Enacted Budget language as described in S.5326/A.2807, to restore the state reimbursement rate for child welfare preventive, protective, independent living, adoption, and aftercare services from the current 62% to the original 75%.

The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy is a 150-year-old statewide, nonprofit organization dedicated to policy analysis and advocacy in support of public systems that meet the needs of disenfranchised populations and people living in poverty. Schuyler Center strongly supports S.5326/A.2807 to amend the Social Services Law (SSL) to restore the state share of funding for child welfare preventive, protective, independent living, adoption, and aftercare services from the current 62% to the 75% originally set when the funding was established in 1980.¹

Tens of thousands of New York children and families—disproportionately Black and brown—are reported to, investigated by, and provided preventive services from the child welfare system every year. Child welfare preventive services—like home visiting, housing assistance, child care, transportation, job training, and cash grants—are designed to prevent the profound trauma of separation.² These services have been credited with reducing the number of New York children placed in institutions and foster care over the past twenty years. Between 1995 and 2021, the number of children in foster care has dropped over 73% from 53,902 to 14,358³ while the number of reports has remained stable at over 100,000 a year.⁴ As of December 31, 2021, 75,088 children and 37,516 families received preventive services.

Notwithstanding the historical improvements these services have secured, most New York children (61%) who are separated from their families and placed in foster or institutional settings are removed from their homes before their family has received preventive services. This fact highlights the need for New York to ensure that families investigated by child protective services are provided preventive services first, before any other action.

Additionally, a recent federal law, the Family First Prevention Services Act, provides new funding to support states providing child welfare Prevention Services, family-based placements, reunification and aftercare support. New York has an opportunity to access these available resources by proactively strengthening its child welfare services. Including S.5326/A.2807 in the Enacted Budget would restore the state share of New York’s open-ended funding for child welfare preventive, protective, independent living, adoption, and aftercare services to the original 75% state share, taking a first step toward redirecting the child welfare system to better prioritize supporting children and families.

March 7, 2023