



Advocates and Family-Serving Providers Call on Governor and Legislature to Prioritize Children and Families in Final Budget Negotiations

April 17, 2023 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Crystal Charles, ccharles@scaany.org

Albany, NY — As State Budget negotiations continue, nearly three weeks past the budget deadline, advocates and providers from across the state are calling upon lawmakers to prioritize the needs of children and families, and the workers that serve them in the final budget negotiations.

Year after year, budget after budget, the families and young people involved in the child welfare system are de-prioritized — or overlooked entirely — in the state budget. We urge Governor Hochul and the Legislature to turn a new page this year and pass a budget that ensures:

- **Families involved in the child welfare system and young adults “aging out” of foster care have access to an effective housing subsidy**, increasing the amount to \$725 per month, indexing to inflation, and allowing eligibility to age 24 for youth. *The housing subsidy — intended to help families stay safely together, and to provide youth aging out of foster care support as they transition into independent living — has not been increased for 35 years, rendering it largely ineffective at stabilizing housing. With homelessness at a record high in New York City and around the state, New York must increase the subsidy, index it to inflation, and make it available to more young people.*
- **Child welfare Prevention Services are prioritized by restoring the State reimbursement rate to the statutory 65%.** *These services are intended to help keep families together and keep children out of foster care. Restoring State reimbursement would enable counties to provide more services and resources to support families in staying together as they navigate the child welfare system.*
- **All youth with foster care experience who are navigating college are supported, by fully funding the Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYCSI) at \$10 million.** *Young people who age out of foster care are statistically less likely to attend or graduate from college than their peers due, at least in part, to a lack of financial support and support navigating the complexities of higher education. Established in 2015, FYCSI provides funding and support services to help young people with foster care experience successfully attend and graduate from college.*
- **The human services sector is supported by funding an 8.5% COLA.** *The human services sector, including children's health home care and Prevention Services managers, has been chronically underfunded, even being left out of appropriate cost of living adjustments (COLA). As the sector continues to lose employees to higher-paying jobs in the private sector, a significant COLA is needed to set the sector on-course toward more appropriate funding for the workforce.*

QUOTES

"Today we remind our leaders that the State budget choices demonstrate their priorities, and those priorities should include New York's children, families, and young people, especially those in communities that have fewer financial resources than others. Families and young people involved in the child welfare system should not be overlooked in these final budget negotiations, as they have been for decades. New York is long overdue to fund the resources and workers that serve our communities," said **Kate Breslin, President & CEO, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy.**

"New York State leaders have an opportunity to put children and families first in this budget. Inflation has ravaged our communities in recent years and yet the child welfare housing subsidy for parents and foster youth has not been increased since 1988, excludes older foster youth who too often age out into homelessness, and the state defers full COLA for human service agencies year after year. Our children, our families, and our communities deserve better. This year must be the year we put children first," said **Paige Pierce, CEO, Families Together in New York State.**

"As our lawmakers negotiate the final budget, we urge them to remember the needs of children and families in their decisions," said **Timothy Hathaway, Executive Director, Prevent Child Abuse NY,** "We know that housing instability, for example, places incredible strain on already-stressed families. By modernizing the child welfare housing subsidy, New York has the opportunity to not only alleviate stress for our families, but also to help young people exiting foster care establish their own homes. We urge New York to include these changes in this year's budget!"

"It is vital that the final New York State budget invests in children, families, programs and staff that build strong futures and success. In the post-COVID world, we need the right services at the right time for at-risk families and their children. Support for the dedicated workforce produces long term savings and a better future," said **William Gettman, CEO, Northern Rivers Family of Services.**

"We know that meeting families' needs creates stability. It is therefore paramount to ensure that families and youth aging out of foster care can access housing and be able to utilize fully resourced prevention programs to support themselves and their families. The State is in a unique and powerful position to pass budget that puts families first, and we urge them to commit to families this year." said **Caitlyn Passaretti (she/her), Policy and Advocacy Associate, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York.**

"Providing meaningful housing subsidies and financial support for a college education to young adults exiting the foster care system will set in motion a path toward success. It is imperative that we also address the vital need for services for children and families currently underserved and already in the child welfare system or at risk of entering. Part of the solution is setting an 8.5% COLA so human service workers dedicated to helping these vulnerable children can make a living wage." said **Ronald E. Richter, Chief Executive Officer, JCCA.**

"As CASA staff and volunteers around the state can tell you, in far too many cases, it is the difficulty in securing housing that delays family reunification or commits a family to the shelter system. As a result, children spend more time in foster care than they need to at a great cost to the child welfare system or become homeless at reunification. Access to affordable, safe, stable housing can help families thrive. An increase in the housing subsidy makes sense for children, families and our state," said **Jackie Boissonnault, Executive Director, CASA of New York State,** "CASA also knows that young people who age out of foster care on their 21st birthday need a runway to independence. Making these youth eligible until age 24 gives these young people that runway they so desperately need, instead of the cliff that so many are now confronted with."

“It is essential that New York State invests in the lives of youth with a foster care background. Fully funding the Foster Youth College Success Initiative and increasing housing subsidy provides youth with a foster care background access to stabilizing supports on their paths to success. Every young person deserves access to the tools they need to thrive. This year’s state budget is an opportunity for New York’s leaders to ensure that our youth with a foster care background are not left behind.” said **Deidra Nesbeth, Director, Fostering Youth Success Alliance.**

###