

Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition

NEW YORK

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Citizens' Committee for Children of NEW YORK



Response to the One House Bills: The Final Budget Must Include Children, Youth, and Families Involved in the Child Welfare System

A statewide group of advocates, providers, and New Yorkers impacted by the child welfare system applaud New York leaders for uplifting child-poverty fighting measures in their One House bills. These investments can support and stabilize families, which in turn limits interaction with the child welfare system. However, we also call upon New York leaders to ensure that youth and families involved in the child welfare system are not overlooked in the final budget.

Areas of Support

The inclusion of the **Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP)**, **Healthy School Meals for All**, **Working Families Tax Credit**, and **monthly income for new mothers (MILC in the Senate, INSPIRE in the Assembly)** in both the Assembly and Senate One House bills demonstrates the compounding needs of children and families in New York. Too many families are struggling, and these investments can make real, tangible changes in their lives. **We urge that these child poverty fighting measures are included in the final budget**, as they also serve to reduce the number of families that become involved in the child welfare system.

We were pleased to see funding for child welfare Preventive Services restored to 65% in both the Senate and Assembly One Houses. This funding stream enables counties to provide more services and resources to support families in staying together as they navigate the child welfare system and youth who age out of the system in living independently. Since 2008, we have lost on average \$30 million dollars a year in prevention services because the State has been reimbursing counties at only 62%. Therefore, **we urge our State leaders to include a 65% state share of funding for child welfare Preventive Services in the final budget.**

Areas of Needed Action

Add a cost-of-living adjustment to the child welfare housing subsidy and allow young people up to age 24 to access it. The current subsidy offers \$725 a month to youth and families involved in the child welfare system and is only available to youth in foster care until 21, depriving youth who age out of care at 21 any housing support as they transition to living independently. *Neither the Senate nor Assembly propose ways to strengthen the child welfare housing subsidy, which we urge them to reconsider to ensure this population receives targeted support.*

Fully fund the Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYSCI) at \$10 million to ensure this life-changing and growing program can fully support all of the young people with foster care experience who are navigating college. *Currently, the Senate proposes \$8.2 million for FYSCI and the Assembly proposes \$8.6 for FYSCI. By increasing funding to \$10 million, more youth with a foster care background can achieve education success and support.*

Fund a flexible 3.2% cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) for human services, instead of targeting the COLA to non-executive positions, and provide **\$195 million in funding to restructure and raise rates for mental health services**. *The Senate proposes \$180 million to fund the 3.2% COLA and the Assembly also proposes a 3.2% COLA.* We are severely disappointed to see no funding to support expanding access to outpatient behavioral health services. New York youth are in crisis, and we cannot wait any longer to provide support. Therefore, in tandem with the [Healthy Minds Healthy Kids Campaign](#), we are demanding an investment of \$195 million into youth behavioral health.

Invest \$80 million to raise salaries and reduce caseloads for Attorney for the Child offices (AFCs) providing legal representation to children in Family Court. Without pay parity, there will continue to be dramatic reductions in the already insufficient number of lawyers available to challenge family separations or inappropriate placements in foster care, which are traumatizing outcomes that disproportionately fall on Black and Latino children and families. *While the Senate proposes \$20 million in funding for increased salaries for AFCs, it is not enough; we urge our New York leaders to invest \$80 million. Unfortunately, the Assembly has not proposed increased funding for legal representation.*

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