



Testimony of the
BROOKLYN BUREAU OF COMMUNITY SERVICE
To the
New York State Division of the Budget
Regarding
Public Hearings in Preparation for the 2008-2009 Budget

November 29, 2007

Testimony respectfully submitted by:

Alan D. Goodman
Executive Director
Brooklyn Bureau of Community Service

I appreciate the opportunity to present the testimony of the Brooklyn Bureau of Community Service to the Division of the Budget as we prepare for the 2008-2009 budget.

The Brooklyn Bureau of Community Service, founded in 1866, is one of Brooklyn's first and largest social services agencies. From seventeen sites around the borough of Brooklyn, we serve over 13,000 people per year. Our mission is to empower our clients to achieve greater economic self-sufficiency and more rewarding participation in the community through programs that nurture and strengthen families, protect children, and enable individuals with disabilities to achieve their full potential. Through these services and advocacy, the Brooklyn Bureau of Community Service works to build stronger and healthier individuals, families, and communities. Our services encompass five principal areas:

- Education and Early Childhood
- Family Counseling
- Job Training and Job Placement Service
- Services to Persons with Mental Illness
- Services to Persons with Mental Retardation/ Developmental Disabilities

To accomplish our mission and provide these services, it is critical that we recruit and retain a well qualified, committed work force. It is crucial to this that we provide cost of living adjustments to our staff. We urge the Division of the Budget to plan for this.

We ask that you ensure the current multi-year cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) are again provided to the human services sector this year and that they be extended for an additional three years to prevent a lag in the provision of COLAs to this critical sector.

With limited resources available for salaries, social services agencies like the Brooklyn Bureau of Community Service continually experience high leave rates among employees which not only impede the delivery of quality services, but also result in efficiency losses. When a program has a high turnover rate, it suffers from indirect costs that result from reduced supervision, employee burnout, and the learning curves of new employees, as well as the direct costs, which include expenditures on overtime pay and job advertisements.

Additionally, we lose staff to employers that are able to provide salaries that have kept up with the rate of inflation. These employers include City and State agencies, 1199 and other unionized contracted agencies, hospitals, and for-profit companies with similar career paths and educational attainment requirements. It is imperative that we be funded to provide COLAs to our staff. COLAs assist us in retaining our trained staff.

We are grateful the FY07-08 Enacted Budget supported the continuation of multi-year COLAs for a number of social service program. We urge that:

- A continuation of the current COLAs should be reset to the most recent CPI and reset each subsequent year.

- Providers should receive 100% of COLAs, indexed exactly to the CPI. In some areas, the full amount of the enacted COLA was not passed on to providers.
- Implementation flexibility must be maintained. Providers as well as City and State agencies agree that the current COLA was executed easily and efficiently because the implementation guidelines were not overly cumbersome.

I also ask that the COLA be extended to a few key programs that have been overlooked:

- Runaway and Homeless Youth, Youth Development and Delinquency Prevention, and Special Delinquency Prevention programs.
- Social Adult Day Care and NORCs.
- SRO and Family Homeless Services (state match).

Additionally, Early Intervention (EI) programs have not received the first two years of the three-year COLA that was approved in the FY06-07 budget. COLAs should be provided to EI programs for the past two fiscal years, as well as the current year.

Please consider extending the current multi-year COLAs for an additional three years and include human service programming previously left out.

Thank you.

:nm