

neighborhood family services coalition

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members

Advocates for Children of
New York
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Church Avenue Merchants Block
Association (CAMBA)
Community Service Society of
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Council of Family and Child Caring
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Harlem RBI
HeartShare Human Services
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Family Health Service
New Settlement Apartments
Community Services
New York Foundling Hospital
New York Urban League
Services to Families
Queens Community House
SCAN New York
Seamen's Society for Children
and Families
St. Raymond Community Outreach
United Neighborhood Houses

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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE DIVISION OF BUDGET November 29, 2007

Re: Child Welfare Preventive Services Funding

Good afternoon. My name is Gigi Li and I am here to testify on behalf of the Neighborhood Family Services Coalition regarding the importance of maintaining state funding for child welfare preventive services.

The Neighborhood Family Services Coalition (NFSC) is a group of service providers and advocacy organizations that is committed to the delivery of quality services for children, youth and families at the neighborhood level. Our overarching goal is to transform best practice into public policy – focusing in the areas of youth development, youth employment, preventive services, and community organizations' collaborations with public schools.

Neighborhood Family Services Coalition is also a member of the Preventive Services Action Network (PSAN), a coalition of advocacy organizations focused on improving access to preventive services.

I want to begin by thanking the NYS Division of Budget under the leadership of Governor Eliot Spitzer for holding this important hearing and for the opportunity to testify.

Background

In order to ensure the child welfare system's ability to protect and serve vulnerable children there is a need for significant investment at the state level in preventive services. Unless and until we improve neighborhood services at the ground level, the capacity to reach and stabilize families will remain dangerously limited.

To that end, we offer the following two recommendations:

▪ **Protect and extend multi-year COLAs in the human services sector.**

Recognizing the importance of regular adjustments, we are grateful the FY07-08 Enacted Budget supported the continuation of multi-year COLAs for a number of social service programs, including preventive services. 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 few additional resources available for salaries, not-for-profit preventive service providers continually experience high leave rates among employees which not only impede the delivery of quality services, but also result in efficiency losses.

▪ **Maintain state match-open-ended funding stream for child welfare at 65/35**

The continuation of the uncapped enhanced state reimbursement for preventive services promotes the safety and well-being of children while reducing the number of children both entering and remaining in foster care.

In conclusion, the child welfare system requires consistent monetary investment to order to build a strong foundation. It is important to remember that protecting our children requires collaboration from state and city agencies, preventive services providers, and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.