

2007 Division of Budget Hearing – November 17, 2007

Testimony from:

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As the city of Batavia Youth Bureau Director for the past 20 years, I'd like to offer some input for the 2007-08 State Budget in the area of youth development. In 2008, the Batavia Youth Bureau will celebrate **50 years of Youth Development** which is a major accomplishment. In 1958, the Batavia City Council established the city's Youth Bureau as promoted by the New York State Youth Commission, to address youth issues in the community. **Since 1945, New York has provided aid to localities for youth service and recreation projects.** In 1974, legislation was enacted which increased the per capita funding to Youth Bureaus thru the Youth Development Delinquency Prevention (YDDP) funding stream. Given today's economic climate, YDDP funding is crucial to localities more than ever. Localities are struggling to provide basic mandated services for residents, including our young people. State youth development funding from OCFS allows localities the opportunity to assess local youth needs and coordinate programs based on the needs.

The Youth Bureau structure and funding stream emphasizes **Local Planning and Design in response to Local Needs.** Every Youth Bureau in New York State follows youth development principals in their program design, but every Youth Bureau's programs and activities are unique to their own community. To date in 2007, the Batavia Youth Bureau has served 560 youth thru an after school program. The after school program is free of charge so that no youth is denied service. The program offers supervised recreational, social, cultural, and educational activities. Over 100 youth have participated in our computer lab this year, doing homework after school, learning a new program, or just surfing the net in a safe supervised setting. 500 youth participated in a Summer Enrichment program thru the Youth Bureau this past summer. This six week program stimulates and occupies youth during the summer vacation. 30 youth with developmentally disabilities participated in our Challenger Tennis Program this past summer. Youth development principals were used in adapting tennis so that all of the youth succeeded in the program. Empowering youth thru various educational and leadership opportunities is a priority of Youth Bureaus. Youth are contributing members of the 105 Youth Bureaus across New York, so that youth have input on issues and programs that impact them and their peers.

These are just a few examples of how state youth development funding (YDDP) is used in local communities. The state funding has been reduced greatly over the past years, leaving local communities and not for profit agencies to struggle to maintain existing programs for our youth. Municipalities and counties across New York are facing fiscal difficulties which many times adversely impact Youth Bureaus, which are minimal

percentages of local budgets. Youth Development programs and activities should not be penalized for poor budgeting practices in communities. Youth Bureaus are accountable; they monitor and evaluate all of their programs on a regular basis. Youth Bureaus have outcomes which they adhere to and report on an annual basis. Youth Bureaus play a key role in communities, being the hub of youth services. Youth Bureaus serve ALL YOUTH! Before decisions are made which could negatively impact youth, I urge budget officials to visit Youth Bureaus across the state to see what they provide for youth.

I strongly encourage New York to keep Youth Development Funding (YDDP) as a priority in the New York State Budget. Please don't penalize young people by cutting funds that are needed to help them develop into healthy, contributing, and productive citizens of New York State. I respectfully ask that YDDP funds thru the Office of Children and Family Services are at the minimum maintained at the 2007 level, but more importantly given a Cost of Living Increase which has not happened for many years now. Our youth and communities deserve that investment! Too many of New York's youth feel as if the community doesn't care about them- According to a Search Institute Survey, only 28% of youth feel as if the Community Cares about them. **We can do better than that!!!** If we want New York's Youth to stay in New York, we need to invest in them and show them we care! **Send a powerful message to our youth and families, that New York cares for all of its Youth, by making YDDP funding a priority in the budget!** Thank you!