

Testimony from:

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On behalf of the Association of New York State Youth Bureaus and the Rockland County Youth Bureau, I would like to offer some input for the 2008-09 State Budget in the area of youth development, and talk about the role of the youth bureau system. New York State has provided aid to localities for youth service and recreation programs since 1945. The Rockland County Youth Bureau, like many county youth bureaus, has been in operation since 1974. The State financial support for the youth development and delinquency prevention programs that our offices support has remained relatively unchanged since that year. (In fact, when the cost of living is considered the per capita formula is less than ¼ of what it was 33 years ago.)

A bit of background may be of use here-A Youth Bureau is an agency created by a municipality (county, city, town or village) for the purpose of planning, coordinating and supplementing the activities of public, private and religious agencies devoted to the welfare, protection, and development of youth. Through a strong collaboration with the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), other state agencies, and multiple local agencies, Youth Bureaus administer a system of locally planned and operated youth-focused programs that serve the needs of children, adolescents and families.

The Youth Bureau system looks at the needs of ALL youth, 0-21 years of age, and not infrequently, provides services for parents/guardians. It is a system that emphasizes local planning and design in response to local needs. The programs in Rockland County are different from the programs in nearby Westchester and Orange Counties and certainly those in the City of New York, because the needs, strengths, and limitations in our county are different from our neighboring counties and the City. County and municipal Youth Bureaus collaborate with other partners to develop local strategies to address local needs. This coordination and planning results in Youth Bureaus administering, monitoring and overseeing a number of youth development public agency and private not-for-profit programs.

The base funding for all Youth Bureaus comes from their local government and the NYSOCFS, with Youth Development Delinquency Prevention Program (YDDP) funds. All county youth bureaus also get NYSOCFS funding for the Special Delinquency Prevention Program (SDPP). Many Youth Bureaus use these funds as a base to secure other funds for youth programs. In Rockland County's case, we also administer and

fund youth programs with funding from: Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Program (RHYA from NYSOCFS), AmeriCorps, Rockland Department of Social Services, Workforce Investment funds and private donations-individual, corporate and foundations. Our base funding from NYSOCFS supports the infrastructure to secure this other funding, which results in services for youth in our county.

Over 50,000 children, youth, parents and guardians in Rockland County are served each year through Youth Bureau programming—this is over 50% of our total youth population! Programs are spread across Rockland County to meet the needs of youth in individual communities. Among the programs we support are mentoring programs, teen centers, after school programs, recreation programs, drug/alcohol prevention programs, youth courts, teen pregnancy prevention programs, child care, conflict resolution, parenting, pre-employment training, the arts, student advocacy, and youth leadership programs.

Over the years, Youth Bureaus have evolved well beyond coordinators and funders of services. We have developed comprehensive infrastructures that administer programs, monitor services, and measure outcomes. We are also advocates for all young people. The expertise that Youth Bureaus have developed to ensure that programs are accountable is a skill that could be applied beyond our current responsibilities.

Youth Bureaus stand committed to providing community-based youth development programs and primary prevention services. We respectfully request continued state support for these programs (YDDP, SDPP, RHYA) at levels that adequately reflect increases in delivering these services, including cost of living. It must be noted that the youth development and delinquency prevention (YDDP) category was \$40,912,700 in 1990 and for 2008 it is \$28,472,000. The Special Delinquency Prevention Program (SDPP) combined A & B categories were \$10,681,600 in 1990 and today it is \$8,576,226. Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) funding has fared somewhat better. In 1990 RHYA was set at \$5,313,700 and in 2008 RHYA will be receiving \$6,314,000. (It should be noted here that if the per capita formula for YDDP, which was set at \$4.50 per youth in 1974 kept up with the Consumer Price Index over the years the per capita formula today would be \$19.07!)

State help is critically needed to provide cost effective prevention programs in our local communities that respond to locally identified needs. These private and public programs provide positive activities that complement and supplement the efforts of our schools as well as those of the parents and guardians. The youth development and delinquency prevention funds are an investment in our neighborhoods and the future workforce of our state.

Thank you for your consideration.