

Remarks for the New York State Office of Budget
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Respectfully submitted by
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Today, we have the opportunity together to remind ourselves, as community leaders, that there is nothing more important than the investment we are making in our children. There is a saying that a mother is only as happy as her unhappiest child. If we extend this notion further, then we might say that a city or a county or even a state is only as prosperous, as its poorest and most underserved and neglected child.

While I could be wearing many different hats today as I offer these remarks, I stand before as a member of the Youth Board, advisory to the Rochester-Monroe County Youth Bureau (RMCYB), one of 105 Youth Bureaus across New York State. The RMCYB is a jointly created city-county youth bureau for the purpose of planning, coordinating and supplementing the activities of public, private and religious agencies devoted to the welfare and protection of our children, our youth and our young adults. Through collaboration and partnerships with the United Way of Greater Rochester, local school districts and municipalities, our Community Foundation, RochesterWorks(local WIB) and other private funders, our Youth Bureau administers a system of locally-based, youth-focused services to meet the needs of children, adolescents and their families.

The RMCYB's regional structure emphasizes **local planning** and design in response to identification of **local needs**. Through a comprehensive and integrated strategy and structure grounded in developmental principles and practices, coordination and planning, we administer, monitor and supervise a number of youth development programs; including the:

- * Youth Development Delinquency Prevention Program (YDDP);
- * Special Delinquency Prevention Program (SDPP);
- * Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) programs;
- Coordinated projects under the Workforce Investment Act;
- other grant funds including the NYS Department of Health, US Dept of Housing and Urban Development and US Dept of Health and Human Services, Federal Youth Services Bureau.

In 2006, RMCYB funded programs reached 43,053 youth throughout Monroe County, providing youth development, primary prevention, early intervention, and diversion services (61%) and recreation/arts/cultural programming (39%).

Across this state, youth Bureaus are also charged with planning, coordination and oversight for the runaway and homeless youth services system. On the way here today, I saw a banner across 490 at Culver Road that read "Stay Home, Be Safe." If only that statement were true for all our children.

In fact, in 2006, in Monroe County, 1,550 youth received runaway or homeless youth services via the RMCYB system. For every youth housed through our RHY system, one youth was not housed due to lack of shelter space in the RHY shelter system. We placed over 600 youth in adult shelters or hotels.

Youth Bureaus' expertise in coordination and collaboration provide them the opportunity to participate in essential planning and policy initiatives within our community. The RMCYB provides staffing support or

participates in numerous community workgroups including the Greater Rochester After-school Alliance, the Community-School Partnership Network, the Youth Services Quality Council of Rochester and Monroe County, the Homeless Continuum of Services, the Youth Council of the local WIB, Juvenile Justice Council, the Monroe County Asset Partner Network, Empire State Coalition for RHY, and other ad-hoc panels as appropriate.

Research-based/Evidence-based Programming and Accountability

But our Rochester Monroe County Youth Bureau, as well as other Youth Bureaus across New York State, has evolved beyond serving as coordinators of service. We have developed comprehensive infrastructures that administer programs, measure outcomes and demand enhanced accountability that exceed the responsibilities contemplated by current funding streams. Locally, the RMCYB requires all funded programs to include within their program model the elements of an effective youth development program and research-based youth development practices, as identified by the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine Report: *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* (Eccles & Gootman, 2002)

Technical assistance, training and consultation are provided to assist programs to provide quality effective services and implement evidence-based/research-based program models.

The RMCYB has partnered with other local funders and local evaluators to pilot outcome measurement tools and program quality measurement tools including the YPQA (Youth Program Quality Assessment) developed by High Scope. Programs are expected to put in place continuous improvement processes.

Youth Bureaus, over 20 years ago, implemented outcome accountability and performance standards tracking and reporting. The RMCYB has shared its monitoring and accountability systems for years; and provided technical assistance to other funders in implementing accountability systems.

In 2006, 96% of all programs funded by the RMCYB met or exceeded contract standards and 99.8% of OCFS eligible funds to Monroe County were claimed by the RMCYB.

Cost Effectiveness and Funding

Dr. James Heckman and Flavio Cunha, two Nobel economists, utilizing an econometric model, simulated the effects of different investment strategies to project developmental outcomes for a population of boys born to young women from disadvantaged backgrounds who were part of a federal longitudinal study begun in 1979. The investment strategies included: early childhood investments, early childhood investment combined with investment during adolescence and a balanced investment strategy throughout early childhood, middle childhood and adolescence. The results were striking. As investments in these underserved children increased, projections showed that high school graduation and college enrollment would rise dramatically. Meanwhile, conviction for crimes, probations and welfare enrollment would fall dramatically. For example, early childhood investments produced a 66% high school graduation rate and a 13% college enrollment rate, whereas a balanced intervention throughout childhood, middle childhood and adolescence produced a 91% graduation rate and a 38% college attendance rate.

The issue of increasing financial commitment to youth development continues to be addressed in targeted and fragmented ways. Many would contend that this is the "nature of the beast" and that the meager available resources should support the development of those youth in most desperate and immediate need. This is understandable in light of current limited funds, but we must not lose sight of the fact that intervening after the problems occur not only is more costly, but often produces limited positive impact.

Other research has also pointed to increases in economic benefits and decreases in economic costs resulting from investing in our young people throughout their developmental years:

- Reduced earnings caused by high school dropouts ages 20-67 mean the U.S. Treasury and state governments take in \$50 billion less in income taxes each year than they would otherwise.
- Households headed by high school dropouts ages 20-67 paid \$3 billion less in property taxes than homes headed by high school graduates.
- If all single mothers who did not finish high school had the opportunity to go back and earn their degrees, government would pay \$7.9-\$10.8 billion less each year in public assistance programs.
- Each young person who fails to finish high school and goes on to a life of crime costs the nation between \$1.7 and \$2.3 million.
- A 1% increase in high school graduation rates would yield \$1.8 billion in social benefits and reduce the number of crimes nationwide by 94,000.

According to research and analysis done by the Academy of Educational Development/The Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, an investment of \$2.55/youth for 1,200 hours/year to develop youth into economically and socially viable adults plus a developmental education can result in a gain of \$10.51 for every dollar invested.

The RMCYB and all Youth Bureaus are committed to providing community-based youth development programs and primary prevention services across the developmental continuum and respectfully request continued state support for these programs at levels that adequately reflect increases in delivery of such services, including the cost of living.

Funds are not protected and dedicated in the manner necessary to sustain the long-term, comprehensive process that is youth development. Increased funds for youth development will be most effective only if they are adequate and secure. "Flat funding" of these programs works to undermine the successes already achieved and severely compromise future successes.

Fragmented programs and funding for youth must become more responsive and accountable for all youth. Youth Bureaus regulatory charge and expertise in planning and coordinating places them in a unique position to assist in the coordination of a more integrated structure around the delivery of services and funds for youth. The Youth Bureau system structure has the capacity to assist New York State as it moves forward in improving outcomes for youth and families.

Based on the effective performance played by our local Youth Bureau, Rochester-Monroe County Youth Board, respectfully requests enhanced fiscal support for these vital youth programs together with additional direct fiscal support for Youth Bureaus in recognition of the additional responsibilities they assume relating to enhanced accountability, program monitoring, service delivery integration and outcome measurement.

Sources

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Early Childhood Investment is NOT Enough



CHANGING THE ODDS OF SUCCESS: AN ECONOMETRIC MODEL

Drawing from available data, Heckman and Cunha simulated the effects of compounding the benefits of investments (interventions) in young people throughout their preschool, middle childhood and adolescent years. They found dramatic improvements in high school graduation and college enrollment among young people considered most "at risk," along with corresponding declines in convictions, probations and welfare enrollment.

