

New York Public Welfare Association, Inc.

Founded in 1869

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Testimony to the NYS Division of the Budget on State Fiscal Year 2008-09 Budget Priorities for Social Services

Sheila Harrigan, Executive Director

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The New York Public Welfare Association represents the 58 local departments of social services statewide. Our members are dedicated to improving the quality and effectiveness of social welfare policy so that it is accountable to taxpayers and protective of vulnerable people. Thank you for this opportunity to share our top budget priorities as the executive budget is developed for 2008-09.

NYPWA Budget Priorities for Social Services

- We support OCFS's budget request to retain the 65/35 reimbursement formula, net of federal funds, for child preventive and protective services. This commitment has promoted child safety and well-being as follows:
 - Children "at-risk" can stay safely with parents who are receiving preventive services
 - Child protective services workers can respond to the increase in child abuse reports that are due to laws on mandated reporters passed in 2007 in response to high publicity cases
 - Preventive and protective services reduce the use of high cost institutional placements
- We support a strong investment in the Flexible Fund for Family Services (FFFS). This is the most effective way to pursue OTDA's mission of increasing economic security and entry into the work force, helping clients with special needs and reducing child poverty. Local departments of social services have built-in fiscal incentives to spend the funds on the services that will be most effective in lifting people out of poverty, meeting performance targets and in preserving federal funding by achieving work participation rates.
- We support the Governor's commitment to maintain the cap on Medicaid which limits the annual growth in local cost. This cap is an important step to preserve property and sales tax relief and enables local investments in human services to continue.

The NYPWA urges that the following be included in the 2008-09 Executive Budget proposal: continuation of the two-year agreement to fund the 65/35 reimbursement formula and support the OCFS Commissioner's recommendation that \$147 million over last year's funding be available to support child welfare preventive and protective services; maximize TANF dollars for the FFFS and fully fund the Medicaid Cap.