

December 5, 2007

Mr. Paul Francis
Director, State Division of the Budget
New York State Division of the Budget
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Director Francis:

On behalf of the New York State Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs, Inc. and each of our 51 independent organizations from across the state, thank you for allowing us to provide our written testimony as it relates to the 2008-2009 budget. We would also like to commend Governor Spitzer and the entire administration for creating an open and increasingly transparent budget process.

The New York State Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs Inc. (the alliance) is made up of each of the 51 independent Boys & Girls Clubs organizations from across the state and in 2006 served more than 290,000 young people in 181 Clubhouses in primarily disadvantaged neighborhoods. The alliance was created in an effort to bring the Clubs together to build more effective and efficient partnerships with the State of New York.

Gangs, violence, drugs, school drop outs, childhood obesity, teen pregnancy; these are just a few of the many problems that young people face today and are costing the state of New York and its tax payers billions of dollars. While we understand the difficult fiscal situation that New York State faces it is our firm belief that now, more than ever, the State must invest in efficient, effective and proven programs like those offered by the Boys & Girls Clubs. Programs that ensure students, especially those who are poor, have access to high-quality after school programs; programs that assist students in improving their literacy skills which of course is critical in breaking the cycle of poverty. Boys & Girls Clubs give the young people that need us most hope and the opportunity and provide them with positive alternatives to the streets and gangs. We would argue that at times like this when the State is facing a deficit, that the State **SHOULD AND MUST** invest in proven programs that are having a measurable impact on young people and that will ultimately save both current and future tax payer dollars.

From New York City to Buffalo, Northern Westchester to the native lands of the Akwesasne St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, Clubs work everyday to give the young people in their communities a safe place to learn and grow, ongoing relationships with caring adult professionals and program opportunities that will help these young people realize their full potential as caring and productive adults.

We would urge the Governor to invest in the following critical prevention programs for children that have a statewide impact and have been empirically tested and found to be effective.

1) After school programs:

There is growing evidence that schools alone can not close the achievement gap. This is especially true for students from low-income families who are experiencing medical, mental health and other problems that impact their ability to learn. Research has shown that high quality after-school programs such as those provided by the Boys & Girls Clubs help students to improve academic performance AND overall social development. These programs **must be continued and expanded through a strong, financial partnership with the State.**

The network of Boys & Girls Clubs that operate throughout the State, help students to meet their potential by providing critical programs in 5 core program areas including:

- Character and leadership development
- Health and Life Skills
- The Arts
- Sports, Fitness and Recreation
- Education and Career Development

One of the Boys & Girls Clubs initiatives that promotes achievement in school is ***Project Learn***. Project Learn is modeled after research that demonstrates that students do much better academically when they spend their non-school hours engaged in fun, but academically beneficial activities that enforces and enhances the skills and knowledge they learn at school.

2) Justice Prevention Programs:

In addition to helping young people succeed in school our Clubs are also providing young people with positive alternatives to gangs, guns and violence. Clubs are a safe haven and are an effective crime prevention strategy. **Gang Prevention Through Targeted Outreach and Targeted Re-Entry** have been proven to be effective in helping young people avoid the lure of gangs and reduce recidivism rates. Both of these efforts are comprehensive programs that mobilize the community and direct at-risk youth to positive alternatives and to getting and staying on the right track. Again we urge the Governor to invest in these proven strategies. Our Clubs across the state would welcome the opportunity to work with the State of New York on these important crime prevention efforts and more.

3) Literacy Programs:

Research has consistency found that investing in literacy is critical in our efforts to stopping the cycle of poverty. This is especially true for the children that are served by the many Boys and Girls Clubs throughout the State. We again, urge the Governor to invest in programs, like Project Learn that are helping thousands of children learn to read and to obtain a more successful, productive and fulfilling life.

Once again, whether it is helping kids succeed in school, avoid gangs and other delinquent behavior or prepare for work our Clubs are ready to partner with the State of New York and to deliver effective and efficient programs that will have a measurable impact on kids across the state.

Sincerely,

Art Cryer
NYS Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs Inc.
Board President

Michael O'Sullivan
Director of Government Relations
Boys & Girls Clubs of America