

**WAYNE COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF AGING & YOUTH**

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**2007 Division of the Budget
Public Hearing**

**Testimony from:
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The Wayne County Youth Bureau was established in 1978. For all most thirty years the Youth Bureau has supported a variety of youth programs for all youth under the age of 21. In 1999 the Wayne County Youth Bureau merged with the Wayne County Office of Aging to form the Department of Aging and Youth. The merger has allowed the Department of Aging and Youth to provide comprehensive services for all ages.

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. For example, Wayne County had a need for an early intervention program in an effort to keep youth residing in their communities rather than being placed out of home. The Department of Aging and Youth implemented a program in 2001 designed to work with school districts to help families that have multiple problems. This program, FACT (Families and Communities Together) works closely with school districts and other human services agencies in Wayne County to help families and prevent out of home placement. In 2006 FACT worked with 91 families and 122 youth.

The Department of Aging and Youth also oversees and monitors recreation programs in the majority of the villages and townships of the county. Recreation Centers and youth organizations receive technical assistance from the Dept. of Aging and Youth for youth development strategies and collaborations. In addition, the Dept. of Aging and Youth contracts with area agencies to meet the needs of Wayne County youth in regards to mentoring, counseling, homelessness and the runaway population. All of these services receive guidance, collaboration, and technical assistance from the Dept. of Aging and Youth. Assessing the needs, planning for these needs and implementing the necessary services are priorities for the Dept. of Aging and Youth.

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. **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!** Through collaborations with OCFS and other public entities, Youth Bureaus administer a system of locally-based, youth-focused organizations serving the needs of children, adolescents and their families. Please help Youth Bureaus across the state continue to provide youth development opportunities to all youth.