

January 22, 2009

The Honorable David A. Paterson
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Paterson:

We write to you today having serious concern about the drastic cuts the Executive Budget proposes for child abuse prevention programs. Home visiting programs cannot possibly continue to protect children from abuse and neglect while absorbing a 35% cut— a move that is sure to carry devastating consequences for thousands of children under the age of five.

Approximately 1,300 children die each year in this country as a result of child abuse and neglect and many others receive serious injuries. In New York State, approximately 75,000 children are found to be maltreated each year.

Child abuse and neglect has been rising at an alarming rate across the State. From 2000 – 2007, the percentage of abused children increased by 21% Statewide and 31% in New York City. Forty-four counties have also experienced increases during this period, some by more than 100%.

Few resources are invested to prevent the abuse from occurring in the first place, while a huge financial cost is placed upon taxpayers to treat the consequences of child abuse—more than \$2.4 Billion according to one study.

The cost of home visiting is \$3,900 per year, per family. The alternatives to prevention are foster care, \$16,000 per year; incarceration, \$30,000 per year; and the many other costs associated with child abuse imposed not only on the victims but all of society.

With high unemployment, thousands of families impacted by the war and an uncertain economy, household stress will give way to child abuse and neglect. This is not the time to target a program so vital to the future of our children for draconian cuts.

It was just last year that a similar attempt was made to cut this vital program for children at risk. Therefore, we implore you to restore this funding in the 30-day Budget amendments and establish a Statewide commission on child abuse prevention charged with setting forth a plan to ensure access to home visitation services for all at-risk families in this State and removing the availability of funding from annual Budget negotiations. Our children deserve better.

Sincerely,

Senator Martin J. Golden
22nd Senate District

Senator Joseph Robach
56th Senate District

Senator Roy McDonald
43rd Senate District