

Hello I'm LuAnne Brown CEO of Buffalo Prenatal Perinatal Network, a community based organization which has been in existence for 30 years. Our Perinatal Network and the other 15 networks across the state were initiated by Governor Mario Cuomo in 1986 in response to the high infant mortality rates in NYS. Our focus is on high risk African American and Hispanic women on the East and West side of Buffalo. We provide home based parenting through the Healthy Families program, the largest program in NYS. The program covers 500 families and focuses on parenting, child development, prevention of child abuse and follows the family until the child is 5. This program is funded by the Office of Child and Family Services. Our other major program is the Maternal Infant Child Health Care Collaborative staffed by Community Health Workers, funded by the Department of Health and that is the program I am highlighting today. This program provides intensive case management to women in all stages of life from young women needing family planning, pregnant women in need of prenatal care or women who have had a previous high risk birth. Our CHW's are indigenous to the populations they serve-in fact 80% of our program participants are people of color and 86% of our staff are as well and 31% of our staff speak Spanish. They ensure their clients are covered from health insurance to a primary care provider to basics like food and housing and even transport the women to appointments to ensure compliance. The infant mortality rate for Erie County is 7.2 while the Healthy People 2020 goal is 6. The African American and Hispanic rate is double this. BPPN ensured a 96% client attendance at prenatal and healthy baby visits- both vital to healthy moms and children. We also cut in half the low birth weight rate for our clients- estimated to save over \$700, 000 in NICU costs annually. We are in the 30% of nonprofit organizations in Erie County who devote 90% of our dollars to programs. We also reduced unintended teen pregnancy by 17%-with each teen pregnancy estimated to cost \$26,000. The importance of a healthy start in life cannot be underestimated-unhealthy beginnings impact a child's life the rest of their life resulting in increased costs to communities in the areas of social services, education and judicial. The costs of prematurity include Early Intervention and special education costs related to the incidence of cerebral palsy, mental retardation as well as vision impairment and hearing loss. It is for this reason I am asking you to stop the anticipated 20% cut to this program-we were already cut 20% last year which was a \$116,000 impact to our agency. This is a short sighted strategy and will impact our community for years to come. I am asking the legislature to consider the importance maternal and childrens health means to our society and reconsider these cuts. As Frederick Douglass stated "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men" Thank you for your attention