



**COMMUNITY
VOICES HEARD**

fighting for our families, fighting for our communities, fighting for ourselves

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**Testimony for Human Services Budget Hearing
Tuesday, February 4, 2014**

My name is John Medina, a Board Member from Community Voices Heard. Community Voices Heard is a membership organization for low income families in New York City, Poughkeepsie, Yonkers and Newburgh organizing around welfare, workforce development, and public housing.

I would like to provide you with some details as to why I feel strongly for New York State to direct Funds towards creating transitional jobs, access to education and training instead of (WEP) Work Experience Program.

I applied for Public Assistance after coming back to the United States from combat in the Persian Gulf War & Iraq because I required help to get on my feet when unemployment expired. I wanted desperately not to end up in a housing shelter with my daughter as a single parent after serving my country proudly as a decorated soldier. I witnessed what poor families go through when applying for public assistance which is degrading and disgraceful especially when we are all American Citizens in the wealthiest nation on earth. Being Poor should not be a crime in America. This is not what soldiers die for defending the Constitution and the Bill of Rights everyday.

In 2012 I was assigned a (WEP) assignment working with the NYC Department of Aging alongside a city social worker receiving a pay check. I worked 30 hours a week without wages and no job training towards permanent work was provided to me. As a WEP worker, I receive no wages so I do not receive Earned Income Tax Credit nor pay into Social Security. This is nothing less than modern day slavery substituting labor's rank and file with free labor under WEP. WEP undermines the middle class structure providing legalized slavery in The United States of America.

NYC Human Resources Administration spends annually millions of dollars on inadequate for profit and non profit agencies designed to place thousands of participants to permanent sustainable jobs. In reality, people receive sub-standard jobs at minimum wages thereby remaining forever in poverty.

(Turn over)

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Currently there is a Bill in the Assembly A7119 (As Wright) and in the Senate S5120 (S5120) eliminating (WEP) as a work requirement and instead replacing it with Transitional Jobs like the Parks Opportunity Program and access to education and real job skill training.

That the Governor's proposed budget increases corporate tax subsidies while allowing WEP, work without wages, is an outrage.

In closing, an item CVH members like in the Governor's proposed budget is recommending local municipalities finance the cost of appeals from public assistance cases being closed from failure to comply. This would be a solution in the right direction only if it leads to less cases being closed due to frivolous allegations by Social Services.

Thank you