

February 8, 2010

Hon. Carl Kruger
New York State Senate
913 Legislative Office Building
District 27
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator Kruger:

We are writing to you as child advocates, lawyers for children, and direct service providers, many of whom served on the Governor's Task Force to Transform the Juvenile Justice System to urge you to restore funding for alternative-to-detention and incarceration and youth development programs that have been targeted for budget cuts in the SFY10-11 Executive Budget. In line with the Task Force's recommendations, the State must ensure localities have the resources needed to provide community-based services for court-involved youth.

The SFY10-11 Executive Budget proposes to close and/or consolidate four Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) operated facilities and invest \$18.2 million to improve staffing ratios and health and mental health services for youth in facility care. These steps are important and will help to align capacity with current population trends and improve the conditions of care for youth in OCFS facilities.

However, the SFY10-11 Executive Budget also includes the following cuts, which will negatively impact New York State's ability to serve youth closer to home and provide them with the cost effective¹ programs and supports needed to succeed in the community:

- \$10.75 million to alternative-to-detention and incarceration programs;
- \$5 million for community re-investment/alternatives-to-detention services; and
- \$46.4 million in TANF funds for youth programs (\$35 million for Summer Youth Employment and \$11.4 for Advantage After-School).

Recent reports² from a number of child advocacy organizations in addition to the Governor's Task Force report all recommend that New York State increase investments for community-based alternatives and youth services that have been proven effective in preventing juvenile delinquency and re-entry into the juvenile justice system.

¹ Research has proven that youth are at greatest risk for delinquency between the hours of 3-6pm and that for every \$1 invested in youth services, \$140 are saved in future criminal justice costs. Fight Crime Invest in Kids. *New York City's Out-of-School Time Choice: The Prime Time for Crime or Youth Enrichment and Achievement*. 2008. Citizens' Committee for Children of New York. *Keeping Track of New York City's Children Eighth Edition*. 2008. While OCFS placement costs upwards of \$210,000 per youth annually and results in a re-arrest rate of approximately 80%, community-based alternatives-to-detention and incarceration can cost between \$5,000-\$17,000 per youth annually and report a 30% re-arrest rate on average. Vera Institute of Justice. *Charting a New Course: A Blueprint for Transforming Juvenile Justice in New York State*. December 2009.

² Inside Out: Youth Experience Inside New York's Juvenile Placement System. Citizens' Committee for Children, December 2009. A Need for Correction. Reforming New York's Juvenile Justice System. Child Welfare Watch. Vol. 18 Fall 2009. Getting Juvenile Justice Right in New York: Proven Interventions Will Cut Crime and Save Money. Fight Crime Invest in Kids. July 2009.

Closing facilities without a strategy to protect and increase investments in community-based programs, including passing the savings onto localities so that they may be reinvested into alternatives-to-detention and alternatives-to-incarceration will dramatically undermine New York State's ability to transform the juvenile justice system and improve youth outcomes. We ask that you restore and expand the State's investment in community-based alternatives and youth services to avert the need for more costly government interventions and to ensure that an entire generation of youth is placed on the right path to a success-filled future.

Sincerely,

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