



The Children's Aid Society

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**Testimony of Terry Kim, Senior Policy Analyst for The Children's Aid Society
Prepared for submission to the Joint Legislative Public Hearing on the
2017-2018 Executive Budget Proposal: Elementary & Secondary Education
held on Tuesday February 14, 2017**

Good afternoon, my name is Terry Kim and I am the senior policy analyst for the Office of Public Policy at The Children's Aid Society (Children's Aid). I would like to thank Chair Catherine Nolan of the New York State Assembly, and Chair Carl Marcellino of the New York State Senate, and the honorable members of the Education Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony about the 2017-18 executive budget proposal that impact elementary and secondary education.

For more than 160 years, Children's Aid has been committed to ensuring that there are no boundaries to the aspirations of young people, and no limits to their potential. We are leading a comprehensive counterattack on the obstacles that threaten kids' achievements in school and in life. Success and strong well-being are contingent upon positive outcomes in four life domains: education, health and wellness, social-emotional development, and family stabilization. At Children's Aid, we are teachers and social workers, coaches and health care providers. We know what it takes to ensure children grow up strong and healthy, and ready to thrive in school and life. We have constructed a continuum of services, positioned every step of the way throughout childhood that builds well-being and prepares young people to succeed at every level of education and every milestone of life.

Poverty is extraordinarily complicated. The challenges confronting kids and their families evolve, and Children's Aid changes with them. We constantly evaluate our practices and seek steady improvement in our results. Today our over 2,000 full and part time staff members empower nearly 50,000 children, youth and their families at more than 50 locations located in early childhood education centers, public schools, community centers and community health clinics in four New York City neighborhoods – Harlem, Washington Heights, South Bronx and the north shore of Staten Island - where poverty long ago established a foothold.

As an agency with a strong state advocacy agenda, we are members of and support the platforms of the New York State Community Schools Network, the New York State Network for Youth Success, the New York School-Based Health Alliance, Winning Beginning NY, and the Fostering Youth Success Alliance. Together, we are on a mission to connect children and youth with what they need to learn, grow, and lead a successful, independent life.

Transforming Education through Community Schools

For nearly 25 years, Children's Aid has operated community schools in partnership with the New York City Department of Education. We believe that community schools is a strategy to remove the barriers to learning that get in the way of children and youth being able to succeed academically in school. We integrate expanded learning programs, comprehensive health services (physical, mental health, dental, and vision), and family engagement strategies into a school building so that school staff can focus on teaching and children can focus on learning—leading to improved academic outcomes. Through the National Center for Community Schools (NCCS), we provide ongoing technical

assistance and training nationally and locally to schools, school districts, and intermediaries interested in implementing the community school strategy.

Currently, Children's Aid partners with 22 community schools in New York City serving nearly 10,000 K-12 students. Nationally, community schools have shown success with increasing student and teacher attendance, and also have a positive impact on increasing parent engagement. Key to the success of community schools is having a lead partner who coordinates the services at the school level, brings in additional resources, programs and services and also has a full-time presence in the school. A study conducted by the Finance Project measured the social return of investment (SROI) of CAS' community schools—and the results were promising. The report highlighted the fact that for every \$1 spent in one community school in Washington Heights, it yielded \$10.30 in savings.¹

Community schools need time and sustained support to increase student learning and success. We thank the Governor for including \$150 million in Foundation Aid Community Schools Set-Aside in his Executive Budget Proposal (\$50 million which is new funding). But additional funds are needed to adequately fund and sustain community schools across the state.

We request that the state maintain existing community school funding streams at \$255 million.

This includes the following:

- Foundation Aid Community Schools Set Aside for high needs districts (\$100 million)
- School Receivership funding for persistently struggling schools (\$75 million)
- One year grant funding for persistently struggling and struggling schools (\$75 million)
- Community Schools Grant Initiative (CSGI) funding for 32 grantees (\$5 million)

We also request an additional \$50 million in new funding (for a total of \$100 million) in new community school investments for school districts to expand and continue their community school initiatives. To maximize the state's investments, **we request that the final enacted budget reserve 5% (up to \$5 million) of new community school funding to provide technical assistance and capacity building support** to ensure school districts have the right training to successfully operate and strengthen their community school initiatives.

With our community schools work we've found that several targeted services or strategies when implemented well succeed in alleviating the barriers to learning for children. We know that regular attendance at a high-quality afterschool program over several years can close the achievement gap in math for low-income students.² Currently Children's Aid serves nearly 3,000 young people in afterschool and expanded learning settings. These programs are an important part of a comprehensive set of services to address the needs of high-poverty communities. Afterschool programs typically include inquiry-based, applied learning that allows youth to take on worthwhile long-term goals and emphasizes collaboration, investigation, and problem-solving. Researchers have identified these types of activities as key for enabling youth to build the critical thinking and social skills that prepare them for success in college and career in the 21st century.³

¹ Measuring Social Return on Investment for Community Schools: A Case Study, The Finance Project. 2013.

² Deborah Lowe Vandell, *The Achievement Gap is Real*, <http://www.expandinglearning.org/docs/The%20Achievement%20Gap%20is%20Real.pdf> (2013).

³ Robert Halpern et al., *Realizing the Potential of Learning in Middle Adolescence*, <http://www.erikson.edu/wp-content/uploads/Realizing-the-Potential-of-Learning-in-Middle-Adolescence.pdf> (2013).

⁴ New York State Office of Children and Family Services CCR Data as of January 1, 2103

Therefore, we support the Governor’s proposal of \$35 million for the Empire State After-School Program. This pilot program would expand afterschool programs to serve an additional 22,000 students in the 16 Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative (ESPRI) cities starting this year. Positive youth outcomes require consistent, long-term participation; therefore, this program must be continued past the pilot year. Next year, expansion of the Empire State After-School Program to additional communities beyond the 16 ESPRI cities would serve other areas that could benefit from increased afterschool programs.

In addition to afterschool and expanded learning opportunities, community schools boost parent/family engagement and increase access to medical and mental health. School-based health clinics (SBHCs) are a proven strategy that integrate primary medical, preventative, dental, vision, and mental health services for children and reproductive health services for youth in their schools. For many children, SBHCs are their primary medical home. We know from experience that if children need medical attention they more than likely will not attend school (contributing to chronic absence) or if they are in school will not be able to focus on learning. The presence of SBHCs in school settings has not only shown to be fiscally prudent but overall has the potential to save the state significant funding on the future healthcare costs for youth. Children’s Aid operates five SBHCs, serving nearly 4,500 students and in 2012 we estimated that we prevented 573 emergency room visits and saved \$974,000 in costs to the city. Also, this is one of the rare school-based programs that receives a state match—for every 64 cents the City funds, the state contributes 36 cents. And we are grateful to have this funding. This is a service that is not only cost effective but works. That is why we **reject Governor Cuomo’s State Budget proposal to consolidate and reduce public health funding and ask that the state restore SBHC funding to last year’s level of \$21 million.** With these essential elements housed in a community school, the work leads to expanded student achievement, stronger families, and ultimately a better New York State.

Making College Success a Reality for Youth in Care

We know that at the end of the day, a quality education and graduation from college are the most consistently reliable ways for kids to break free from poverty. In New York State there are approximately 20,000 children and youth in foster care, of which 40% are adolescents and young adults ages 14 and above.⁴ Many youth leave care without the support of a caring adult or family, and when barriers or emergencies arise, many don’t have savings, relatives, or friends to rely on. When discharged, youth are expected to learn how to be an adult through trial and error. For any youth seeking to go to college, the college and financial aid application processes are often daunting tasks.

First established in the 2015-16 budget, the Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYCSI) is led by the Fostering Youth Success Alliance, a statewide advocacy group that, through collaboration, advocacy, and youth empowerment, aims to improve the socioeconomic, physical and mental health, housing, and educational outcomes for youth in and aging out of foster care and their successful transition to independence. Housed at Children’s Aid, FYCSI aims to bridge the gap from foster care to college success, for the state’s most vulnerable youth. There are currently two cohorts of students serving nearly 350 students who are on the path to college success, participating in FYCSI across 70 college campuses. We are sincerely grateful that funding for FYCSI has a place in Governor Cuomo’s executive budget proposal, but there is not enough. **We know that it takes \$1.5 million to support each cohort of students, creating a pathway for the students to have a reasonable chance of success, and his budget proposal falls short of the \$4.5 million needed this year.** The Governor’s current executive proposal will be cutting resources from an entire cohort of students that are currently in college, and have no other resources to rely on to help them through college.

Closing Remarks

The Children's Aid Society sincerely thanks the NYS Legislature for their vigorous support of the neediest families and communities in New York. The issues outlined above are of extreme importance to Children's Aid and our children and families and we will do all that we can to advocate, protect and increase funding. It is the right and moral thing to do to ensure that our children and families have the best opportunity available to realize their full potential.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony on these very important and critical issues in the lives of children and families in NYS. Please feel free to contact me at tkim@childrensaidsociety.org or (212) 949 -4935 with any questions regarding this submission.