



TESTIMONY TO THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING ON 2015-2016
EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL ON HUMAN SERVICES

Jennifer O'Connor

*Co-Chair, New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) Policy Committee
New York State Director, Council for a Strong America*

Additional questions can be directed to:

Nora Niedzielski-Eichner

Executive Director, NYSAN

neichner@nysan.org / 646-943-8671

Our thanks to Senator DeFrancisco, Assemblymember Farrell, Senator Felder, and Assemblymember Lupardo, and to the other members of the Finance, Ways and Means, and Children and Families Committees for the opportunity to present testimony to you regarding the Executive Budget Proposal.

Afterschool, summer, extended learning time programs, and other expanded learning opportunities play a crucial role for New York families and students. 1.1 million New York students want an afterschool program and do not have access to one. That number remains unchanged from 2009. To build an innovation-focused economy, ensure our children are graduating college and career ready, and keep them on track for healthy adult lives, New York needs to invest in high-quality afterschool and summer learning experiences. These programs help all of our students, no matter where they live, engage in hands-on learning, avoid risky behaviors and involvement with the juvenile justice system and stay on track to develop into active citizens. They can be crucial for working families, who need to know that their children are safe between the end of the school day and the end of the work day.

Last year, Governor Cuomo proposed \$160 million in additional funding for afterschool programs annually. We were disappointed that there was no new funding for afterschool programs in the Executive Budget, and we hope that the Legislature will **work toward at least \$178.5 million in new statewide funds annually to allow 110,000 students to begin attending afterschool programs in schools and communities that have already expressed their need for a program.**

To maintain programs at FY2014-15 levels, we request the Legislature **restore \$500,000 in Advantage After School.** In order to restore the Youth Development Program to FY2014-15 levels and expand juvenile justice diversion and delinquency recidivism programs we request the Legislature **provide \$2.4 million for the Youth Development Program.**

We hope that the Legislature and the Governor will begin to plan for continued investments, building on the \$178.5 million recommendation and New York's long history of strong afterschool programs, to eventually serve all of the estimated 1.1 million children who need an afterschool program and do not have access. Children across the entire state need the benefits of afterschool and summer programs.



Need

The state currently has many fewer high-quality programs than are needed, depriving more than a million students of support for their intellectual, social, and emotional development and their families of safe, affordable places for their children to continue learning until the work day ends. The lack of funding for afterschool and summer programs puts an additional burden on schools to meet students' needs without additional learning time or community support.

The *America After 3 PM* survey of parents and guardians found that an estimated 1.1 million New York students would attend afterschool programs if one were available.¹ This is the same number as when the *America After 3 PM* survey was conducted in 2009.² In 2009, New York was ranked third in the nation on a combined score for afterschool availability and quality. In 2014, New York did not even make the Top 10. Funding for afterschool remains 35% below pre-recession levels and substantially below need.

A review of recent grant competitions reveals that New York currently has the capacity to run additional programs utilizing at least \$170 million in additional funds. In 2012, OCFS conducted a grant competition for Advantage After School. An additional \$48 million would be needed to fund all applications which met the minimum criteria to run a safe, beneficial program. In 2013, NYSED conducted a grant competition for 21st Century Community Learning Centers program (federal funding administered by NYSED) to fund afterschool programs. An additional \$122 million would be needed to fund all applications which met the minimum criteria to run a safe, beneficial program. There is sufficient strength within existing community organizations and sufficient demand from schools and school districts—every application had a school partner—to launch a program at the scale NYSAN is recommending.

We are deeply concerned that the Governor's proposal for failing schools and school districts in the Education Opportunity Agenda Article VII bill will further stretch these already overextended funding streams. While we are pleased that the Executive Budget recognizes the value of the community schools and expanded learning time strategies for struggling schools, these strategies and resources are needed by students and families in many schools. Directing the Commissioner of OCFS to prioritize failing schools for afterschool funding without adding additional funding will close strong, long-standing programs in other communities, putting those schools and students at-risk of falling behind without the additional resources the afterschool program had been providing. Afterschool, summer, expanded learning, and community schools strategies should be fully supported so the students and schools receive the support they need long before they begin to fail.

NYSAN is also recommending 5% (\$8.5 million) to support quality professional development and technical assistance for afterschool programs and their staffs. Much as we support the professional development of teachers and school leaders to ensure that our schools can provide

¹ Afterschool Alliance, *America After 3 PM*, 2014, <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/>.

² Afterschool Alliance, *America After 3 PM*, 2009, <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/AA3PM-2009.cfm>



the best learning experience for all our students, afterschool program educators and directors need training and support to ensure that all of New York's students have access to high-quality programs.

Potential Impact

The body of research on high-quality afterschool and summer programs has grown substantially in the last few years, and shows clear evidence that high-quality programs have significant effects.³ Regular attendance at a high-quality afterschool program over several years can close the achievement gap in math for low-income students.⁴ High-quality summer programs can help students improve their math achievement by the equivalent of 17-21% of what they would normally learn in a year.⁵ Afterschool and summer programs support the development of critical thinking and social skills needed for long-term success in the workplace and in life. 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.⁶

As featured in both *The Economist*⁷ and *The Atlantic*⁸ last week, researchers are also finding that the challenges of achieving the American Dream are partially due to the opportunity gap. The After-School Corporation estimates that gap is 6,000 hours before children even leave elementary school.⁹ Children from well-off families play sports, learn an instrument, travel to museums and colleges, explore hobbies, and volunteer. Through these types of experiences, children become more likely to be engaged in learning because they can connect it to a real world situation and an opportunity for their future. These experiences often make children from well-off families stronger candidates for colleges and employers—think of all the spaces on college applications for students to present themselves as having interests and experiences outside of school. All our children need such enrichment activities, and afterschool programs are an effective way to close the opportunity gap.

Just a few examples of the innovative opportunities provided by New York programs:

³ New York State Afterschool Network, *Top 10 Reasons You Should Support Expanded Learning Opportunities*, http://nysan.org/files/3992_file_Top_10_Reasons.pdf (2014).

⁴ Deborah Lowe Vandell, *The Achievement Gap is Real*, <http://www.expandinglearning.org/docs/The%20Achievement%20Gap%20is%20Real.pdf> (2013).

⁵ Wallace Foundation, *Building Our Understanding of Summer Learning* <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/summer-and-extended-learning-time/extended-learning-time/Documents/Knowledge-in-Brief-Building-Our-Understanding-of-Summer-Learning.pdf> (2014).

⁶ 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).

⁷ *The Economist*, *An Hereditary Meritocracy*, <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21640316-children-rich-and-powerful-are-increasingly-well-suited-earning-wealth-and-power?fsrc=scn/tw/te/pe/ed/anhereditarymeritocracy> (2015).

⁸ Alia Wong, *The Activity Gap*, <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/01/the-activity-gap/384961/> (2015).

⁹ TASC, *The 6,000-Hour Learning Gap*, <http://expandedschools.org/policy-documents/6000-hour-learning-gap#sthash.DhamOIOW.dpbs> (2013).



- The Comet Design Co. in Carthage is an entrepreneurial program for high school students where participants write a business plan, utilize 3D printers and other high-tech devices to create real products, and then sell the products to support the afterschool program.
- Family Services Afterschool Programs in Poughkeepsie has partnered with the Animal Farm Foundation, providing students an opportunity to engage in a hands-on way with animals in need of care and to learn how to prevent animal cruelty.
- The Children's Aid Society in New York City has been providing youth from high-need neighborhoods the opportunity to intern in the offices of their elected officials, giving these youth the chance to gain valuable experience in a public service.
- The new Boys and Girls Club of Massena, a community facing growing heroin and prescription drug addiction among youth, is working in concert with the local police department to provide a positive alternative for youth, through a program that gives students a safe, educational place to go once the school day ends.
- Kiaran's Kids, a youth mentoring and outreach program at Belmont Park in Nassau County, gives students a behind-the-scenes look into what takes place at a race track, including demonstrations in horse grooming, blacksmithing, and horse riding, while teaching them about the many different careers available in horse racing.
- Youth Philanthropy Council, a program provided by the Northern New York Community Foundation in four local high schools in the North Country, provides youth the opportunity to learn how the grant making process works and recommend grants to assist non-profits organizations in enhancing the quality of life in their community.
- The Garden of Fire is a summer program held in Steuben County for at-risk youth that offers camp goers the opportunity to participate in art activities, learn to drum, and receive counseling, concluding with a glass blowing demonstration connected to one of the region's major industries.
- The Torch Club, part of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Albany, gave back to their community this year by taking part in the Joy Maker Challenge, where participants cooked and served a healthy, organic meal for the Albany Emergency Shelter.

As New York seeks to ensure that all students graduate college and career ready, it must invest in afterschool and summer programs as partners to schools in achieving that goal. NYSAN recommends that the Legislature **work toward at least \$178.5 million in new statewide funds annually to allow 110,000 students to begin attending afterschool programs in schools and communities that have already expressed their need for a program.** We hope that the Legislature and the Governor will begin to **plan for continued investment to serve the estimated 1.1 million children who need an afterschool program and do not have access** so that the benefits of afterschool and summer programs can be made available to all of the students and families across New York who need them.

Additional Recommendations

Accept the Governor's proposed increase in the Summer Youth Employment Program to \$30 million, and increase by an additional \$19.31 million to add 10,000 new jobs and pay the increased minimum wage. Summer Youth Employment (SYEP) dollars are a double



investment in youth by the state. Working as staff for summer programs for younger children is the most common work assignment for SYEP participants, so SYEP allows summer programs to serve more children while supporting older youths in their transition to the workforce. While we are fully supportive of the minimum wage increase, SYEP needs to be increased to support the increase in wages to \$8.75 an hour and to increase the number of students who can participate.

Accept the Governor's proposal for \$250,000 to increase enrollment in the Child and Adult Care Food Program. The Child and Adult Care Food (CACFP) Program is a federal entitlement program that, among other aspects, funds healthy snacks and suppers for children participating in afterschool programs that serve low-income communities. Unfortunately, not all programs that qualify for these funds are aware of them or enrolled, and a targeted push to increase enrollment in New York is needed. We estimate that enrolling just 50 afterschool programs not currently enrolled would bring \$1 million in federal funds annually to New York.

Accept the Governor's proposal to provide \$50 million in a Nonprofit Infrastructure Capital Investment and increase that funding to \$500 million. Community-based organizations that run afterschool programs through state grants could benefit tremendously from these one-time funds to make capital investments. Key projects are likely to include renovations of community centers that provide afterschool programs and are held to a high standard for facility safety and accessibility and the acquisition of technology that allows afterschool programs to operate more efficiently and better demonstrate their impact on students' lives.

Invest an additional \$100 million in child care subsidies to serve at least 13,000 children who are eligible and waiting. Continue to expand that investment to reach \$2.2 billion annually by the year 2020 to provide universal access to the estimated 305,000 children of working parents who are currently eligible for and in need of high--quality early learning. More than a third of child care subsidies in New York support child care for school aged children, including afterschool programs. Investing in child care subsidies helps families ensure that their children are safe after the school day ends, and the need is currently much higher than the available funding.

Add a total of \$2.4 million for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) programs, which would include a restoration of \$254,456 to maintain SFY 2014-15 levels. Despite significant investments proposed for Homeless Assistance and Services in the Executive Budget, there is no specific support for unaccompanied minors or the runaway and homeless youth population. We urge the Legislature to address the need for increased programming and services for the youth served by the RHYA programs.

