



**Testimony at the Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Human Services
Tuesday, February 6, 2018
Provided by: Jenn O'Connor, Director of Policy and Advocacy**

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I am Jenn O'Connor, Director of Policy and Advocacy at Prevent Child Abuse New York.

Prevent Child Abuse New York (PCANY) provides three primary services both locally and across the state of New York. Our **community awareness** efforts are aimed at increasing understanding of how individuals can use the Five Protective Factors to help prevent child maltreatment. Specific programs include the Parent Helpline and the Pinwheels for Prevention Campaign.

Our **training and technical assistance** efforts are geared to providing professionals and communities knowledge, tools and resources to make great environments for families and children. We provide Healthy Families New York Home Visiting Certification, and run the New York State Parenting Education Partnership, Enough Abuse Sexual Abuse Prevention, Community-based Strengthening Families and Child Abuse Prevention courses. In addition, we provide direct staff consulting and mini grants to organization that are implementing prevention strategies.

Finally, our **policy and advocacy** work drives initiatives both at a state and local level designed to change systems that impact child maltreatment issues. We advocate for evidence-based policy solutions that target root causes of child maltreatment including increases for early childhood home visiting, early care and education system development, reduction of unplanned pregnancies, and family stability/ economic issues.

I am here today to speak to you about the importance of investing in several programs that strengthen families and decrease abuse.

Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting

We were pleased to see that the Executive Budget includes recommendations from the 1,000 Days on Medicaid Initiative, including funding for maternal, infant, and early

childhood programs in three high-need communities. This proposal leverages existing evidence-based programs and prioritizes communities with greatest need. We urge the Legislature to support the recommendations of the First 1,000 Days workgroup, including its home visiting component.

However, we were once again disappointed to see already-established home visiting programs flat-funded, instead of increasing their capacity. Healthy Families New York, Nurse-Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers, and The Parent-Child Home Program, Inc. are research-based and proven to decrease abuse, improve health outcomes, and increase school readiness. Yet only 5% of eligible children currently receive home visiting services. According to a recent report from the New York State Citizen Review Panels, 279,600 children in our State could benefit from home visiting. Why are we not investing in these programs?

In addition, we know that the home visiting workforce is hard working and stressed. In order to retain staff, who have made important connections to families, we ask that you include \$200,000 to create the position of statewide coordinator. The coordinator would provide model-neutral training to support the workforce and better prepare them for their responsibilities, while also promoting the central or coordinated intake model that the Department of Health has introduced and which supports referrals across programs. In this way, we could close gaps between programs, serve more families better, and retain dedicated staff.

Child Care

Last year, the Executive Budget transferred \$27 million from child care subsidies to senior services. This was unfair, and you fought back. We thank you for restoring \$20 million and for making the case for the rest of the funding. The Executive Budget restores the \$7 million.

- Increase State funding to stabilize the child care workforce and infrastructure, and to ensure equitable access to quality care. Reinstate the 75th percentile formula to establish reimbursement rates and allocate funding to providers who receive subsidies to cover increased costs as the State implements the new minimum wage requirements.
- Direct a portion of Economic Development funds to expand access to quality care and bolster the workforce.
- Increase funding for facilitated enrollment, to expand access to subsidies for working families.
- Expand and adjust the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit; allocate on a monthly or quarterly basis to assist those low-income families who live paycheck to paycheck.

Housing

Inadequate or unpredictable housing causes unnecessary stress for families, which can sometimes lead to abuse. And let's face it—no child should have to worry about having a roof over their head.

We urge you to invest \$40 million for each of five years (total \$200 million) in the Home Stability Support program. This initiative creates a statewide rent supplement for families and individuals who are eligible for public assistance benefits and who are facing eviction, homelessness, or loss of housing due to domestic violence or hazardous living conditions. The supplements will be a bridge between the current shelter allowance and 85% of the fair market rent determined by HUD.

In closing, thank you for considering our budget requests. We know that there is a deficit and that funding is tight. We also know that child abuse is preventable if we invest in programs that support and strengthen families. We think that's money well spent.

*Note: PCANY supports the full *Winning Beginning NY* legislative agenda.