



**Testimony at the Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Human Services
Thursday, January 30, 2020
Provided by: Tim Hathaway, Executive Director**

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I am Tim Hathaway, Executive Director of 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.

All of our work centers around the belief that child abuse occurs because families are under stress and not supported. Multi-generational trauma exists due to poverty, violence, and substance abuse (among other factors). PCANY focuses great attention on decreasing and addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) while increasing Protective Factors and Resilience. All of our budget asks would serve to strengthen families and the communities they live in.

Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting

These voluntary programs are research-based and proven to decrease abuse, improve health outcomes, and increase school readiness. We know that these programs are helping to combat the opioid crisis by providing support to addicted mothers and babies. They are addressing the specific needs of immigrant families. And they are including fathers in their programs more than ever. Home visiting is a proven prevention strategy. Unfortunately, we are still only serving 5% of eligible children.

All of the programs we support were either not funded or flat-funded in the Executive Budget.

We ask that you invest additional dollars in the following:

- **Parent-Child Home Program: \$2 million**
- **Healthy Families New York: \$1 million**
- **Nurse-Family Partnership: \$4 million**

We also ask that you continue to support the home visiting pilots include in the 1,000 Days initiative.

Over the last six months, we embarked on an initiative (the Home Visiting Coordination Initiative—HVCI) to hear from home visitors, parents, and other community providers about what they need to better support families. We conducted 25 summits in all ten regions of the State.

Themes emerged:

- Implementation of universal prenatal home visiting (first in the country)
- Launch of a public awareness campaign to educate families and expectant parents about the benefits of home visiting
- Expansion of coordinated intake (one-stop-shop for families; referrals to the right program for them)
- Investment in workforce supports and professional development to increase staff (and therefore family) retention and decrease turnover; enhance program quality

We will continue to speak with you about legislative pathways to implementation of our recommendations, which will be released soon. In the meantime, we ask that you shore up existing programs so that, when universal home visiting becomes a reality, New York State has programs to refer higher need families to.

Family Resource Centers

Family Resource Centers (FRCS) are voluntary programs that, while diverse in their offerings, “all promote the strengthening of families through developing social support, increasing knowledge of effective parenting, fostering child development, and enhancing family functioning.” Services include parent education classes, concrete services such as food pantries, and information and referral services. FRCs receive

state funding through the NYS Office of Children and Family Services/Hoyt Memorial Children and Family Trust Fund.

Through our work on home visiting, the Mohawk Valley Region identified the need for a FRC as its top priority. Due to transportation challenges, the Region wants its FRC to be mobile. Community partners have a plan—they just need the funding to get it off the ground. **We request \$200,000 for two FRCs—one in the Mohawk Valley and one in a location to be determined.**

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.

Again this year, **we urge you to invest \$40 million (and \$80 million in subsequent years) 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.

Child Care

The Executive Budget does not include any increase for subsidies or workforce development. New York's child care system is in crisis. High-quality child care, costing an average of \$15,000 annually per child, is prohibitively expensive for nearly all low- and middle-income families, and fewer than 20% of low-income families eligible for child care subsidies are receiving them. Child care educator salaries are so low that many live in or near poverty (the average median wage is \$12.38 an hour or \$25,760 per year). Child care providers, unable to meet rising costs, are closing their doors in rising numbers. Another year of underinvestment in child care will not only leave thousands of New York working families scrambling to find quality, affordable child care, it will jeopardize the very survival of the state's child care infrastructure.

Further, while we welcome the Governor's proposal to expand the state's child tax credit to cover New Yorkers under age four, it is a mistake to suggest, as is done in the Budget Briefing Book, that this \$330 per year credit (at its maximum) will provide meaningful help to families facing annual child care bills that easily exceed \$10,000. In fact, the Empire State Child Credit is a working family tax credit, intended to make low-wage paychecks stretch further to cover the everyday high costs of raising children. This credit is not intended to, nor is it robust enough, to enable low-income working families to afford child care. So, too, we welcome new investment in pre-K, but note that does not help families in urgent need of quality, affordable child care for their babies, toddlers, and pre-schoolers, nor those in the many school districts without pre-K.

To prevent New York's child care system from falling into further decline, and to lay the groundwork for the state to develop a model child care system that provides all New York families access to quality, affordable child care, **New York needs to make at least two building block investments in child care this year: \$40M to create a fund to increase workforce compensation and improve child care quality; and \$60 million to incrementally increase guaranteed eligibility levels and decrease the co-payment multiplier.**

Afterschool

High-quality afterschool programs not only provide safe child care for school-age children; they strengthen the protective factors (such as relationships with caring adults) that are so important for children, especially those with the highest need. This year, our afterschool partners are providing trauma training for providers—something we would like to see happen statewide. Unfortunately, current funding is too low to adequately enhance programs.

The Executive Budget again cuts **\$5 million** from the Advantage Afterschool Program. **We urge you to restore this funding, as you so graciously do every year.**

We also ask that you **invest an additional \$5.12 million, which would increase the per-pupil rate from \$2,000 to \$2,320.** Our research shows that the actual per-pupil cost ranges from \$3,000 in Buffalo to \$6,000 in New York City. Most of that amount goes to paying salaries because of the minimum wage increase. Paying for salaries *and* for supplies/activities is challenging.

Closing

Thank you for considering our budget requests. We know that funding is tight and that your ability to augment the Executive Budget proposal will be difficult. We also know that child abuse and neglect 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* and Empire State Campaign for Child Care agendas, as well as the NYS Child Welfare Coalition's priorities.