

**Testimony  
Of  
Jacqueline A. Negri, Executive Director  
Association of New York State Youth Bureaus**

**February 16, 2011**

**Before  
The Joint Fiscal Committees of the NYS Legislature  
on the 2011-2012 Executive Budget**

**John A. DeFrancisco, Chairman, Senate Finance  
Committee**

**and**

**Herman D. Farrell, Jr., Chairman, Assembly Ways and  
Means Committee**



Good morning honorable chairman and other distinguished members of the Legislature. My name is Jackie Negri and I am the Executive Director of the Association of New York State Youth Bureaus (ANYSYB).

ANSYB represents New York's Youth Bureau Systems which is comprised of 109 county and municipal youth bureaus providing quality youth development, prevention, intervention services to over 2 million youth, from rural towns and villages, to small cities and urban centers since 1945. The youth bureau system embodies the definition of youth development as an ongoing process in which children and adolescents seek ways to meet their personal and social needs while building life skills and competencies that allow them to be successful and learn how to function effectively in their daily lives. Positive youth development and prevention services include, but are not limited to programs that build skills to prepare New York's youth for graduation, work, and civic responsibilities and to prevent them from entering the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. Youth Bureaus and their providers offer school drop-out prevention programs, worker readiness and summer jobs, mentors, obesity prevention, literacy, supports for runaway and homeless youth, pregnant and parenting teens and youth involved with drugs and gangs and leadership training for civic engagement.

**For over 60 years, New York State's Youth Bureau system has provided youth prevention, intervention and development services and programs to more than 2 million young people under the age of 21 throughout the state – nearly half of the youth population.**

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Understanding the troubling fiscal and economic climate in New York State, there is no doubt that tough decisions need to be made however, crisis brings opportunity. And we believe there is an opportunity for youth prevention, intervention and development services in New York State without dismantling the current system. Unfortunately, the SFY 2011-2012 Executive's Proposed Budget does just that – dismantles the current effective, cost-efficient long standing youth bureau service system in New York State which provides youth development and prevention services to over two million youth to age 21.

### **Proposed Primary Prevention Incentive Program**

*The proposed Primary Prevention Incentive Program (PPIP) dismantles the youth bureau system by eliminating long standing youth development and prevention funding sources - Youth Development Delinquency Prevention (YDDP); Special Delinquency Prevention Program (SDPP) and Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA). In addition, it goes on to slash these allocations by 50% and then creates a funding mechanism for a competitive bidding process requiring counties to access reimbursement through the 62% state /38% local match.*

**First, the competitive distribution of the PPIP will eliminate funding to many counties and allows for the loss of local planning and control; thereby promoting inequities in prevention and positive youth development services across the State.** *For example, a county with lower residential placements or child protective rates may have solid community supports and primary prevention programs that are currently funded by Youth Development Delinquency Prevention (YDDP), Special Delinquency Prevention Programs (SDPP), and Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHYA). Once stripped of funding, due to the competitive distribution of the proposal, these counties' placements and rates will skyrocket, creating greater residential need and child protection at higher costs to the State. The long-term, youth development allocations throughout New York State serve as a foundation to support other areas of services, such as integration to the community, lower recidivism and placement rates. Conversely, if this allocation is altered, or becomes ever-changing, this will de-stabilize a broader health and human services*

network. Though Youth Development is not Child Welfare, nor Juvenile Justice, these supports can and do play a critical role.

**Second, the severity and disproportionate 50% proposed reduction in youth funding, in addition to a 30% reduction in YDDP, SDPP and RHYA over the past three years, is a factor for concern for youth and families in our communities.** Funding, albeit less than in the past, for Youth Development and Prevention Services must continue to be provided through a fair and equitable formula-driven allocation through municipal structures that ensure appropriate monitoring, evaluation and accountability as prescribed in Executive Law 410, 19A. Also, if a county does not receive State Aid currently provided through Executive Law 420, 19A, they stand to lose other local, state, federal and private funding. The youth bureau system is the impetus to garner local funding (through match requirements) and used to leverage a tremendous amount of other public and private support, well beyond the current allocation. And, the youth bureau system under the Executive Law has allowed for a base of support and the ability to be competitive in securing federal (such as AmeriCorps, SAMSHA, U.S. Health and Human Services, etc.) and private sector funding. Clearly, if this threshold of funding diminishes or fluctuates year to year (as it has the potential to do under this proposed PPIP); it will have a negative impact on other health and human services well beyond the current allocation and, in fact, can be the cause for community-based services to close.

**Third, we believe that the July 1, 2011 effective date will leave many youth bureaus and programs uncertain of funding and of their existence.** If funding is eliminated and services are no longer available in July, we will leave runaway and homeless youth, high-risk kids and their families, as well as many others without their network of services and supports. Transformation of the system, coupled with cost savings, is certainly something to consider during this economic climate however, *dismantling a cost-effective youth bureau system has many unintended consequences for the safety and well-being of all youth, including mostly high-risk youth.*

**Lastly, youth funding distributions should be held to universal standards related to accountability, monitoring and evaluation to attain successful outcome performance and tangible results. In addition, youth funding should be guided by national evidence-based practices in youth development, such as Ready by 21 or Touchstones, as currently administered by youth bureaus --- not to the best grant writer.** The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) invest considerable resources in the Quality Youth Development (QYDS), utilized by county Youth Bureaus. QYDS tracks outcomes for initiatives and provides evidence that a documented youth development framework, that includes the features of positive youth development settings, will improve outcomes for all youth, including high-risk. This system provides a concrete way to identify common outcomes for state funded programs and a system of monitoring and accountability for Youth Bureaus and their contractors. Therefore, accountability is key for successful youth development, not competitive bidding.

## **PROPOSAL TO ELIMINATE SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT**

Thousands of New York State teens are positively impacted each year with the help of a summer job. Data shows that a summer job not only generates income for local communities as spending is invested back into the community, but the work experience gives summer youth workers positive experience resulting in quality outcomes. Teens who have a summer job are more likely to complete and graduate high school and have higher earnings during their adult working years. According to an analysis released by the Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies, employment rates among teenagers have dropped nearly four times faster than the rate among adults since 2000. According to the study, it is especially bleak for low-income black students; only 4 in 100 found work. This issue is vital in African American and Latino communities where underemployment and high unemployment is often the most severe. The lack of jobs for our young people puts them at risk in multiple ways. Adolescents and young adults that have difficulty finding employment become discouraged, and many will stop trying. Those that give up are then unable to develop important job skills, which makes it likely that they will remain unemployed (or underemployed) well

into their adult years. In addition, studies show that individuals that are unable to find jobs in their early years have higher rates of dropping out of school and are more likely to commit crimes. These risks paint a bleak future for our youth if summer employment funding is eliminated.

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**New York faces unprecedented fiscal times. No doubt, these times call for leadership and change. To be fiscally prudent, efforts should not be made to dismantle the Youth Bureau structure nor determine positive youth development and prevention funding by a competitive bidding process. Rather, the focus should be on how the state's current investments can coalesce toward a common goal for prevention services and the positive development of all youth, albeit a more cost-effective one.**

ANYSYB needs the Legislature's assistance and leadership in keeping this system intact, for all of New York's youth, including hundreds of thousands of high-risk youth. ANYSYB respectfully asks your consideration to assist over 2 million kids in maintaining a youth prevention and development system through the youth bureau structure by:

- **Uphold the State's formula driven youth funding appropriations, as outlined in Executive Law 410 Article 19a, (and RHYA) to maintain effective positive youth development and primary prevention services to ensure that all counties, cities, towns and villages have the opportunity to lower residential placements, lower recidivism, lower child protective rates and prevent delinquency;**
- **DO NOT ACCEPT THE PROPOSED PRIMARY PREVENTION INCENTIVE PROGRAM (PIIP). Ensure that all counties receive equitable funding and accountability is defined locally through monitoring, evaluation and performance based outcomes, not by a competitive bid which rewards the best grant writer;**
- **Restore appropriations to YDDP, SDPP an RHYA, albeit with proportionate reductions and keep these funding streams intact so they may continue to reach all youth in all counties, cities, towns and villages in New York State;**
- **Support community juvenile justice prevention, intervention and re-entry by assisting municipalities in reducing their placements and recidivism and to increase permanency through the current cost-effective youth bureau structure ;**
- **Uphold the responsibility of the NYS Office of Children and Families Services (OCFS) in the implementation of the Quality Youth Development System (QYDS), in which significant resources have already been invested, to promote accountability, monitoring, evaluation and outcome performance measurements for all youth development funding.**
- **Restore \$15.5 million in funding, if needed with a proportionate reductions, to the Summer Youth Employment Program.**

On behalf of the 2 million youth being served by positive youth development, prevention and intervention services I thank you for this opportunity and offer my assistance and that of the Association of NYS Youth Bureaus on issues, data or questions of concern regarding New York's Positive Youth Development and Prevention System.

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