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For Immediate Release: February 10, 2009

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**YOUTH ADVOCATES OPPOSE THE
GOVERNOR'S YOUTH SERVICE BLOCK GRANT
AND ASKS STATE TO PROTECT
YOUTH PROGRAMS**

Albany, New York- Over 300 Youth advocates and youth gathered on Tuesday to call attention to and oppose the Governor's Executive Budget proposal to create a Youth Service Block Grant (YSBG) which would result in a \$28 million or 24.5% cut to youth programs. YSBG consolidates 7 different funding streams that include both mandated detention services (secure and non-secure) and non-mandated youth services and alternatives-to-detention and placement programs. At risk are is funding for **after-school, school drop-out prevention programs, worker readiness and summer jobs, mentors, supports for runaway and homeless youth, pregnant and parenting teens and youth involved with drugs and gangs and leadership training for civic engagement.** sports and *school drop-out prevention programs, worker readiness and summer jobs, mentors, supports for runaway and homeless youth, pregnant and parenting teens and youth involved with drugs and gangs and leadership training for civic engagement.*

arts, youth leadership and other community-based programs across New York State that help to engage youth in developmentally appropriate out-of-school time activities.

These programs are also vital part of the social safety net that working families rely on to keep their children safe during out-of-school time hours. Now more than ever, the state's youth service programs must be kept whole as families face the burdens of the deepening financial crisis. **Kyle Stewart, Executive Director, YMCAs of New York State** agrees that the YSBG would have a negative consequence and says, "The Youth Services Block grant, as proposed, has the potential to devastate the structure of our youth services programs. Funding reductions to critical areas such as: after school, mentoring and job training; results in undue pressure on other State funded programs, leaving no options for those in need."

(Insert quotes from youth, parent, on how a program has positively impact them and to demonstrate need..)

Also, the start date for YSBG is also set to be retroactive to January 1, 2009 which would unfairly penalize and shortchange providers for services already rendered that are much-needed. **Valerie R. Bochenek Associate Executive Director, Community Maternity Services,** an agency of Catholic Charities of the Albany Diocese explained that, "With upstate New York experiencing staggering rates of teen pregnancy, and the huge, ongoing cost to taxpayers associated with the needs of those youth and their children, CMS relies on funding from local Youth Bureaus in five different counties to fund programs to help pregnant and parenting teens reach goals of safety, health and independence. The current loss of

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funding has already led us to reduce staff and services to these vulnerable young people making it difficult to continue to provide case management and parenting services for pregnant and parenting adolescents.”

(Insert quote from provider etc. on impact of retroactive date..)

(Other quotes?)

Although the Executive Budget suggests that YSBG would provide greater flexibility to localities on spending, the block grant actually cuts, consolidates and pits mandated detention services against non-mandated youth programs which are already in short supply. “The Youth Services Block Grant is nothing more than a budget cut that will make it more difficult for the state to achieve its goal of reforming the juvenile justice system. The block grant will impede localities from providing greater normative supports for youth at the community level – as. Furthermore, those of us closer to the ground know that decisions related to use of detention or community-based alternatives, rests not with local administrators but often with Family Court Judges,” said **Jennifer March-Joly, Ailin Chen, Senior Policy Associate, Executive Director of Citizens’ Committee for Children (CCC) of New York**, a New York City-based child advocacy organization.

“The administration’s effort focuses on keeping kids out of the state operated juvenile justice facilities but fails to offer viable alternatives. You can’t have it both ways. The Youth Bureau system is a viable alternative. Combining mandated services, such as detention, with prevention services, diminishes a viable alternative. Something will have to go. This block grant approach as constructed is unfair to the two million kids receiving these youth development and prevention services. The proposal to dismantle an effective youth development system has many unintended consequences for the safety and well-being of all youth, including many high-risk, including runaway and homeless youth,” .” said **Jackie Negri, Executive Directors, The Association of New York State Youth Bureaus.**

Preserving New York State’s continuum of community-based youth services is also critical for the 350,000 “disconnected youth” between the ages of 16 and 24 who are not in school and not working. “These young people didn’t become disconnected from school and society overnight, but over time,” said **Jenn O’Connor, Senior Policy Associate, Schuyler Center for Advocacy and Analysis (SCAA).** “We must do a better job of preventing children and youth from becoming disengaged in the first place. When they do become disconnected, we must provide services and supports that will help them re-connect and lead successful, productive lives.”

Anthony Ng, Deputy Director of Policy & Advocacy, United Neighborhood Houses, adds “The Governor’s proposed Youth Services Block Grant is a bad idea. New York’s youth deserve better than this.” At a time when the state has committed to reforming the juvenile justice system and serving youth closer to home, March-Joly adds that it makes little sense to cut the very youth programs that have been proven to reduce delinquency and keep kids safe. CCC’s 2008, *Keeping Track of New York City’s Children* notes that every \$1 spent on youth services saves \$40 in future criminal justice costs.

In New York City alone, CCC found that 480,000 children do not have access to youth services. With demand far outweighing supply, and as families struggle to meet basic needs, youth advocates are asking the Governor to make an investment in New York’s future and preserve youth programs.

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