

SAMPLE LETTER TO YOUR LEGISLATOR ON YOUR LETTERHEAD

Dear Member of Assembly/Senator (INSERT NAME),

IF YOU MET IN PERSON AND DISCUSSED THE ISSUE

Thank you for meeting with representatives and youth from (NAME OF YOUTH BUREAU), which provides youth development and prevention services for over (ESTIMATE HOW MANY) youth in (LIST COUNTIES SERVED WHICH ARE IN THE LEGISLATOR'S DISTRICT). The youth truly enjoyed the opportunity to meet with you (OR TO MEET WITH YOUR STAFF IF LEGISLATOR WAS NOT PRESENT).

As discussed, (NAME OF YOUTH BUREAU) services provide many opportunities for the youth development and prevention in your district. The youth expressed the services in the areas of youth development and prevention that were very meaningful to them. (NAME OF YOUTH BUREAU – IF THERE WERE SPECIFICS DISCUSSED, PLEASE BRIEFLY TOUCH UPON).

IF YOU DID NOT MEET FIRST

I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself as an active member of your community. As (TITLE) of the (NAME OF YOUTH BUREAU), which provides youth development and prevention services for over (ESTIMATE HOW MANY) youth in (LIST COUNTIES SERVED WHICH ARE IN THE LEGISLATOR'S DISTRICT).

In addition, (NAME OF YOUTH BUREAU) is an active member of the Association of New York State Youth Bureaus (ANSYB) 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 member agencies provide positive youth development and prevention services which 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, supports for runaway and homeless youth, pregnant and parenting teens and youth involved with drugs and gangs and leadership training for civic engagement.

FOR ALL LETTERS

Understanding the troubling fiscal and economic climate in New York State, there is no doubt that tough decisions need to be made that will have an impact on youth and families. **However, crisis brings opportunity.** And we believe there is an opportunity to restructure youth prevention, intervention and development services in New York State without dismantling the current system. Unfortunately, the Governor's SFY 2009-10 proposed budget does just that – dismantles a 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. In so doing, the system is being proposed to be dismantled, absolving New York State from oversight and muddling detention services with prevention services through a county block grant. Outlined below are some concerns (NAME OF YOUTH BUREAU) has with the Executive's proposal and respectfully asks your assistance to intervene on behalf of the (NUMBER OF YOUTH SERVED) in (NAME OF COUNTY/MUNICIPALITY)

- First, the proposal **absolves the New York State Office of Children and Family Services' responsibility of youth development and prevention** by allowing for a county block grant approach that will be disjointed, county by county, with no state oversight and no accountability to youth prevention services. The proposal eliminates the current youth bureau system as it stands in Executive Law, Article 19a and proposes a block grant where the Chief Executive Officer of a municipality designates the lead agency for the purposes of administering the grant.
- The proposed block grant of services combines youth prevention and intervention services (*Youth Development and Delinquency Prevention Program – YDDP; Special Delinquency Prevention Program – SDPP; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act – RHYA; Alternatives to Detention and Alternatives to Residential Placement*) with state mandated services (*Secure and Non-Secure Detention Services*). **The combination of detention and prevention services proposed in this proposed block grant is detrimental to our young people.**
- Second, the proposal reduces funding and eliminates any matching requirements which will force youth bureaus out of business and could potentially eliminate preventive services. **The recommended funding in this proposal is down 24.5%, from \$118 million to \$90 million.** And, the proposal calls for “local flexibility and decision-making” which actually will be lessened under this type of block grant. Our county may be forced to choose between mandated detention services and youth prevention services, with less money than ever. In our region, (GIVE CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF WHAT SERVICES/PROGRAMS COULD BE LOST)
- Third, and most disturbing is a **January 1, 2009 effective date**, which leaves (NAME OF YOUTH BUREAU) uncertain of funding and of our existence. And, we could stand to lose (NAME A FEW EXAMPLES). **WE NEED YOUR ASSISTANCE TO RESCIND THIS IMPLEMENTATION DATE.**

We need the Legislature's help and leadership in keeping this system intact, for all of New York's youth, including high-risk youth. We respectfully ask that you assist us in our fight for the following:

AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE EXECUTIVE'S PROPOSAL FOR YOUTH PROGRAMS BLOCK GRANT

- 1) **Keep Executive Law 420 Article 19a** to maintain the current youth bureau system;
- 2) **Reverse the repeal** of the SFY 2008-09 appropriations for YDDP, SDPP and RHYA.
- 3) **Establish a statewide task force** to look at the current youth development, prevention and intervention system and make recommendations for a youth prevention system which cost-effectively serves the best interest and needs of the 2 million youth receiving services;
- 4) **Delay the JANUARY 1, 2009 block grant effective date**, as proposed in Article VII legislation, until prudent review of the current system and the needs of all youth, including high-risk youth, is conducted;
- 5) Work collaboratively to develop Youth Prevention Funding and **remove any State mandated services (Secure and Non-secure Detention Service) from any proposed Youth Prevention Funding stream;**
- 6) Consolidate additional State youth prevention funding in a Youth Prevention funding stream, which allows for leveraging of public and private funding, including federal funds.
- 7) **Assure that such funding streams reaches youth in all counties and cities, towns and villages in New York State;**
- 8) **Uphold the responsibility of the NYS Office of Children and Families Services (OCFS)** for system accountability; approving local plans; guiding cost/benefit methods and calculations; providing technical assistance; training and capacity; developing outcome and performance criteria, evaluating outcome measurement and conducting resource development work;

- 9) Sets aside funding (\$200,000) for youth development, prevention and intervention training and capacity building to include training at the local and statewide level by sharing best practices, enhancing monitoring and evaluation, researching national models, and adhering to positive outcomes.**

Again, thank you for your continued support for youth development and prevention services. If you need any information or data regarding youth development and prevention services in (NAME OF COUNTY/MUNICIPALITY), feel free to call me directly at (PHONE NUMBER) or contact ANYSYB at nassocia@nycap.rr.com or 518-869-4930.

Sincerely,

(NAME, TITLE, YOUTH BUREAU)