



TESTIMONY

BEFORE

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS  
AND  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

HEARING

ON

THE 2009-2010  
EXECUTIVE BUDGET

PRESENTED BY

JEANNE B. MULLGRAV  
COMMISSIONER

NEW YORK CITY  
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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COMMISSIONER

NEW YORK CITY  
DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2009

Thank you for this opportunity to present written testimony on the State 2009-2010 Executive Budget to the members of the Senate Committee on Finance and Assembly Committee on Ways and Means. We are Jeanne B. Mullgrav, Commissioner of New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) and Neil Hernandez, Commissioner of New York City Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ).

DYCD and DJJ understand the severe economic challenges our nation, State and municipalities are facing. We recognize the need to exercise fiscal constraint as we safeguard our citizens' well-being and strategically invest in our current and future generations and their communities.

DYCD and DJJ appreciate the State Legislature's support and your commitment to young people, as evident by past funding restorations to Youth Development and Delinquency Prevention (YDDP), Special Delinquency Prevention Program (SDPP), Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA), and Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) appropriations. DJJ also appreciates that the Legislature restored the cut proposed by the Executive Branch to eliminate the reimbursement for detention services.

However, when faced with tough economic conditions, difficult decisions should not be made at the expense of our youth. In particular, we would like to express our concerns about the Youth Programs Block Grant (YPBG) proposal in the SFY 2009-2010 Executive Budget.

As you know, the YPBG proposes to consolidate youth prevention and intervention services with State-mandated youth detention services and impose a 24.5% overall reduction to the combined appropriations. This proposal will have a detrimental impact on the delivery of vital services to young people in cities and counties throughout the State. Specifically:

- The significant budget cut of 24.5% or \$28 million translates to a loss of approximately \$9.7 million in detention dollars and \$1.4 million in youth prevention funding to the City of New York in Fiscal Year 2010.
  - The proposed budget reductions would prevent localities from meeting service mandates, including health, mental health and psychiatry, as well as court orders for detained youth by the Family, Criminal and Supreme Courts.
  - The City would potentially lose critically-needed crisis and transitional independent living beds for runaway and homeless youth at a time when demand for these services is likely to be especially high.
  - Working families in need of afterschool and summer programs will find fewer childcare services for their children, at a time when such services are needed to maintain job security and household incomes.
  - The proposal also impacted the continuation of \$2.725 million in local SDPP-funded contracts directly with service providers.
- Under the current detention and prevention programs, available resources have enabled the City to leverage other funding, including City Tax Levy and private monies to provide comprehensive support services for the young people in our respective systems.
- The proposal may unintentionally cause the dismantling of the existing youth development and prevention infrastructure in New York State, eliminating Youth Bureaus, and resulting in disjointed systems of youth services in each county and

- municipality. The current infrastructure has allowed localities to secure significant funding over and above the State budget allocations.
- While the YPBG proposal theoretically offers flexibility to local governments, in practice, it will force many local governments to choose between public safety (detention services) and youth development services.
  - The City is taking a disproportionate share of the cut in detention services, at \$9.7 million in Fiscal Year 2010, out of the total \$15 million reduction that would result from passage of the block grant.
  - While the City and localities will see their funding cut as part of the block grant, the requirement to reimburse the State for **50 percent** of the cost of local youth placed in the State system will remain in place.
  - The proposed effective date of the YPBG is January 1, 2009 is also a concern. This retroactive date is already causing great uncertainty amongst local governments and the provider community, who have grave concerns about the fiscal impact to contracts now in place through June 30, 2009. Additionally, it does not allow providers to work with their participants to ensure a continuity of services and a seamless transition, where service reductions are required. DJJ enters into multi-year contracts for non-secure detention and mandated health services to ensure capacity and continuity of services, and these programs would be affected as well.
  - While the proposed block grant realizes State savings resulting from the City's reform of the juvenile justice system, which decreased placement of City youth in State facilities, it does not reinvest in local reform efforts. This may lead to higher detention usage locally with significantly diminished resources.
  - This proposal ignores the State's reliance on local detention for youth under their care who are in local detention rather than the State juvenile justice system, such as youth who are State-ready and stay beyond mandated timeframes, and youth who run away from residential settings under contract with the State who are held temporarily in local detention.

As the budget process advances, we look forward to working with the State Legislature to develop sound solutions to maintain a State-wide youth development system and ensure that detention services continue as needed.

On behalf of the 8.3 million residents, including 2.3 million youth, in New York City, we thank you for your continued support and urge you to make young people a priority in the State 2009-2010 Executive Budget.