



**Testimony before the Joint Fiscal Committees
SFY 2022-23 Executive Budget
Human Services Budget Hearing
February 2, 2022**

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The Schuyler Center thanks the chairs and members of the respective committees for the opportunity to testify on the 2022-23 New York State Executive Budget. The Schuyler Center is a 150-year-old statewide, nonprofit organization dedicated to policy analysis and advocacy in support of public systems that meet the needs of disenfranchised populations and people living in poverty.

Our priorities this year, as in the past, focus on strengthening families before they experience crises or trauma and preventing families from enduring hardships like ill-health, economic insecurity, child welfare involvement, or encounters with juvenile justice. Another over-arching priority: ensuring comprehensive and strategic investment in our youngest New Yorkers, ages 0 to 3, when their brains and bodies are most rapidly developing, with impacts that can last a lifetime.

Schuyler Center leads and participates in several coalitions focused on children and families, including the Empire State Campaign for Child Care; Raising New York; the Child Welfare Coalition; CHAMPS (Children Need Amazing Parents); Winning Beginning New York; Fostering Youth Success Alliance; Raise the Age; Medicaid Matters New York; and a statewide workgroup on maternal, infant, and early childhood home visiting, which brings together State agencies, providers and advocates to strengthen coordination between and access to important whole-family interventions.

In 2022, the Schuyler Center celebrates the 150th anniversary of our founding by Louisa Lee Schuyler. Today, our work remains grounded in her ideals of compassion, advocacy, leadership, and partnership.

OVERVIEW

2021 marked the second pandemic year; a year in which New Yorkers fell into a strained “new normal” that for many children – particularly our youngest – is all they have known or remember. For New York families, 2021 brought critical public supports, including a third federal pandemic stimulus payment and an expanded, monthly child tax credit, buffering many from the pandemic’s sharpest economic impacts. Yet, New York families and children are not out of jeopardy. In December 2021, both the United States Surgeon General and the American Academy of Pediatrics sounded the alarm about the mental health crisis facing the nation’s

youth. With COVID resurging, parents are once again juggling work with remote schooling, child care closures, and quarantine, and worrying anew about how to keep their children – particularly young children ineligible for vaccines – safe. Despite the challenges, there is reason to believe that with continued strong public health measures; effective, equitable government interventions; and a bold, innovative rebuilding strategy, the future for New York children is bright.

What New York children and families need to put them on the path to recovery and success is a budget with a plan to prioritize their needs. What all New Yorkers who are low-income and struggling need is a budget with a plan that prioritizes investments that will reduce inequality and lead to a recovery that leaves no one behind.

New York State enacted the Child Poverty Reduction Act in 2021, committing the State to reducing child poverty by 50% in the coming decade with attention to racial equity. The law creates an expectation of public accounting for progress over time and assessment of budget actions with regard to their impacts on child poverty. In this first year since enactment, we ask our partners in and outside of government to systematically evaluate each and every budget decision for its impact on child poverty.

CHILD POVERTY

CONVENE THE CHILD POVERTY REDUCTION ADVISORY COUNCIL SWIFTLY AND TAKE BOLD STEPS THIS YEAR TO BEGIN MEETING CHILD POVERTY REDUCTION ACT'S GOAL OF CUTTING CHILD POVERTY IN HALF IN A DECADE

New York leaders passed the **Child Poverty Reduction Act** last year. The timing could not be better. We know from experience after the Great Recession, if leaders do not act with urgency and firm resolve, children and families hit hard by the pandemic could suffer the impacts for years after the state turns the corner to recovery. In the wake of the Great Recession, child poverty in New York rose to 23% in 2011 and hovered there through 2014, after which it slowly declined to 18% in 2019. For Black and Latino children, the child poverty rates post-Great Recession sky-rocketed. For Hispanic/Latino children, they reached a shocking 36% in 2012; for Black children the rate hit 35% in 2013.¹ For all children, rates reduced steadily after 2013, but racial disparities persisted.

The sobering lesson to draw from the state's experience after the Great Recession: If New York does not take immediate, decisive action, it could take years, if not decades, to reverse the child poverty impacts of the pandemic. We look forward to the Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council being convened without delay, and acting swiftly to set New York on track to dramatically reducing child poverty, starting this year.

New York should implement evidence-based strategies each year to set New York on a path to reducing child poverty and moving families into economic stability beginning this year by expanding and strengthening New York's child tax credit.

New York's Empire State Child Credit provides eligible taxpayers a credit equal to 33% of the federal child tax credit at the levels that existed prior to the passage of the 2018 federal tax overhaul, or \$100 per qualifying child, whichever is greater, for children age 4 through 17;

children under age four are excluded from the credit. It is available to many of the state's immigrant families.

Emerging national data tracking the impacts of the temporary expansion of the federal child tax credit in 2021 as a form of pandemic relief confirms how effective refundable tax credits can be in reducing child poverty and its many negative and lasting impacts, particularly if targeted to reach the poorest and youngest.

We urge New York to expand the Empire State Child Credit to cover New York's youngest children (under age four), along with children facing deep poverty, and to increase the maximum available credit. These actions would put New York on track to turning the tide on child poverty.

CHILD WELFARE

The child welfare system serves children and families facing significant challenges. The system includes the Statewide Central Register (SCR), child protective services, preventive services, foster care, and adoption/post-adoption. The responsibilities placed upon the child welfare system are enormous and profound, and adequate resources are required if the system is to fulfill them.

2018 saw the passage of groundbreaking federal legislation: the Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First). This law makes prevention a priority while at the same time aiming to strengthen foster care supports for children who need it. Family First provides states and tribes the opportunity to use federal Title IV-E funding – the principal source of funding for child welfare services – to support mental health, substance use disorder treatment, and parenting programs that help keep families intact and out of the child welfare system. Family First encourages the placement of youth in family-based settings while reserving placements in congregate care for children in need of clinical services. This federal law presents New York with a tremendous opportunity to bolster its preventive services and strengthen family-based foster care services. October 2021 marked the beginning of New York's implementation of Family First to meet requirements of the law and ensure that children who must be in foster care are placed with kin or in a family-based setting whenever possible, and congregate care settings are only used when clinically necessary.

STRENGTHEN PREVENTIVE SERVICES - INCLUDING IN COMMUNITY-BASED PRIMARY PREVENTION - TO KEEP FAMILIES STRONG AND INTACT

This is an important year for child welfare funding in New York State, as the child welfare funding statute expires and must be reauthorized for another five years. New York State currently invests state dollars in services for families to avoid deeper child welfare system involvement and support children remaining safely in their homes. This open-ended state reimbursement has contributed to the dramatic reduction of children in foster care since 2010 through supports including housing assistance, child care, clinical services, home visiting, transportation, job training, education, and emergency cash grants.² Many of these kinds of resources are not eligible for federal reimbursement, making it a crucial state budget issue. State-funded and open-ended prevention funding is necessary to continue to build a broad continuum of ways to support family well-being.

The **Executive Budget** proposes \$610.1 million in funding for the preventive, protective, independent living, adoption, and aftercare services. This represents level funding compared to last year's final budget.

For the third consecutive year, the **Budget** proposes that \$382.3 million of the preventive, protective, independent living, adoption, and aftercare services funds be first drawn from the TANF Flexible Fund for Family Services (FFFS). The requirement for localities to draw from FFFS first, referred to as a spending threshold, is the amount localities must spend on child welfare before drawing down a portion of preventive services funding from the State. Counties use FFFS funding to support social services programs, including those for low-income seniors and families. The budget's proposal would maintain a \$40 million increase made to the FFFS spending threshold in the 2020-21 Enacted Budget, which is effectively a \$25 million cut to preventive services funding.

The **Executive Budget** also, once again, reduces the State share of preventive funding from the 65% written in statute to 62%. Localities use this open-ended, matched funding stream to pay for services that include child protective services and services to prevent children from entering, or re-entering, foster care.

The **Executive Budget** proposes maintaining funding at \$12.1 million for the Community Optional Preventive Services (COPS) program. COPS funds primary prevention services – available to families without an imminent risk of entering foster care – which include group parenting skills education, general community-wide education, school-based and “therapeutic” programs, and home visiting. A more strategic approach to prevention would make services available further upstream, before there is any documented risk of entry into foster care.

The **Budget** proposes to reauthorize funding for preventive services for five years, through June 30, 2027.

Schuyler Center urges the State to robustly fund secondary and primary prevention services without cost shifts to local government by: reauthorizing and fully investing in the child welfare statute, including restoring the 65% State share of prevention; restoring funds transferred from FFFS to preventive services; and expanding and strengthening primary prevention.

STRENGTHEN THE HUMAN SERVICES WORKFORCE

The **Executive Budget** proposes funding a 5.4% cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) for certain State-funded human services programs at \$411 million. For the Office of Children and Family Services, the budget increase applies to the Foster Care Block Grant, the adoption subsidy, and supportive housing for transition-age and former foster youth, for a total of \$10.4 million.

Schuyler Center urges the Legislature to support the human services workforce, ensuring New York State provides and expands the services that support New York children and families.

RESTORE FUNDING TO THE FOSTER CARE BLOCK GRANT

The **Executive Budget** proposes funding of the Foster Care Block Grant at \$390.7 million, an increase of \$7.2 million as compared to last year's final budget. The increased funding will support the 5.4% Human Services cost-of-living-adjustment for this program.

Counties use the Foster Care Block Grant to pay for foster care and the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) (a subsidized guardianship that supports and enables kin to provide a permanent home to relative children who cannot live safely with their parents). The state imposed a deep cut to the Block Grant of \$62 million in 2017-18.

Sufficient foster care and KinGAP funding is essential as the State begins implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Prevention Act, which requires states to strengthen and expand its family-based foster care and kin options, so children are not placed in congregate care settings unless clinically necessary.

Schuyler Center urges the Legislature to restore funding to the Foster Care Block Grant to 2016-17 levels, so counties have resources needed to provide quality services to the children and young people in their care.

STRENGTHEN THE HOUSING SUBSIDY FOR FOSTER FAMILIES AND YOUTH

Each year, approximately 1,000 youth age out of foster care.² As many as one-third of youth who age out of foster care experience homelessness, and many more experience unstable housing arrangements. Currently, youth and families involved in the child welfare system may receive a housing subsidy of up to \$300 per month to help stabilize their housing.

In 2019, the Legislature passed, and the Governor signed into law, legislation clarifying that young people who receive this subsidy should not be precluded from living with roommates. This was an important reform, given the high costs of housing, and the importance of community and positive relationships for all young people, including those transitioning from foster care.

However, more policy changes are necessary to enable young people and families involved in the child welfare system to utilize the subsidy. First and foremost, the housing subsidy allowance must be increased. This amount (\$300/month) has not changed since 1988. However, the cost of housing is substantially higher: New York State's median monthly gross residential rent is \$1,280 per household; in New York City, that jumps to \$1,443.³ Given these high costs, a \$300 monthly subsidy is not sufficient to stabilize the housing of youth or families in most cases.

Another barrier to utilization is that the subsidy is only available to youth until they reach age 21. Because New York extends foster care until age 21, this means that youth aging out of the system are unable to avail themselves of the benefit to assist them in their transition to independent living.

Schuyler Center urges the Legislature to increase the monthly foster care housing subsidy to reflect current housing costs and increase the upper age limit of eligibility from 21 to 24 so that youth who age out of foster care at age 21 can avail themselves of the subsidy program

for up to three years.

STRENGTHEN ADOPTION SUBSIDIES AND FOSTER PARENT REIMBURSEMENT RATES

Adoption subsidies are monthly maintenance payments for adoptive families that may be available based on the special needs of a child. These subsidies continue until the child is 21. The State pays a 62% share of these maintenance payments.

The **Executive Budget** would invest \$225.9 million in the adoption subsidy program. This would amount to a \$37.1 million increase compared to last year's final budget. This increase will support additional investment for the adoption subsidies and the 5.4% Human Services cost-of-living-adjustment.

A lawsuit won by the Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition of New York in December 2021, requires an increase in adoption subsidies and foster parent reimbursement rates.⁴ The proposed budget increase of \$32.7 million this year will cover the increased rates for adoption subsidies. This budget included no increased funding to cover the increased costs for reimbursements to foster parents; for those the budget expects counties to shoulder 100% of the increase in rates.

Schuyler Center urges the Legislature to increase funding for the Foster Care Block Grant to cover the much-needed increase in rates for foster parents; without state funding to support the increased rates, counties, which must currently cover 100% of the increased costs, may have to cut back on other essential services for children and families to cover these costs.

STRENGTHEN THE FAMILY FIRST TRANSITION FUND

The **Executive Budget** does **not** propose funding for the Family First Transition Fund, which supports counties' efforts around recruiting and supporting foster and kinship families in preparation for implementation of the federal Family First Preventive Services Act. This would amount to a reduction of \$3 million compared to last year's final budget.

The Family First Transition Fund is a crucial resource for improving state and local policies and practices related to recruiting, retaining and strengthening foster and kinship families and evaluating current use of residential care. The program was implemented in 2019, and has helped many counties undertake important steps to reduce their reliance on congregate care, and strengthen their kin and family-based care in the transition to New York's implementation of the federal Family First Preventive Services Act (Family First). However, some counties have been unable to make use of the funds because of structural barriers. One challenge for some smaller counties is that the allotment they received was too small to be useful, i.e., insufficient to cover the costs of a full-time employee to expand the county's kin outreach and support services. Another barrier faced by some counties has been that the funds are reimbursement-based. With counties facing tremendous fiscal challenges due to the pandemic, many have struggled to front funds.

Schuyler Center urges the Legislature to fund the Family First Transition Fund and

recommends that new funds be combined with unspent funds from previous years and the allocation methodology and allowable use of funds be retooled to enable counties to better implement Family First. Retooling could include allowing counties to draw down funds before expending them and allowing counties to join together to pool the somewhat limited resources and, for example, hire jointly for a shared position.

STRENGTHEN KINSHIP GUARDIANSHIP ASSISTANCE (KINGAP) BY FUNDING IT AS A PERMANENCY OPTION OUTSIDE OF THE FOSTER CARE BLOCK GRANT

A relative is a preferred caregiver for children who are removed from their birth parents because such placements help to maintain connections to family and culture. The State should provide robust funding for programs that support families willing to step in and care for young relatives when the parents cannot.

The **Executive Budget** continues to fund the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) through the Foster Care Block Grant (FCBG), diverting scarce funds from critical programs that aid foster youth (FCBG), to fund an important program that is not foster care, but a permanency option (KinGAP). This diversion of funds is particularly problematic given the sharp cuts to the Foster Care Block Grant in 2017-18. In 2011, New York implemented KinGAP using funds from the FCBG, with the intent to use the FCBG for a period of just one year, but KinGAP continues to be funded through the limited FCBG. Although the number of children in foster care has declined, the health and service needs of the children who are in care are crucial. The FCBG funds must be preserved to meet their needs.

Relatives caring for children in approved or certified foster care settings can apply for KinGAP when both adoption and family reunification are ruled out. Many of these families need financial assistance to continue caring for a foster child in their home. With this option, kin families can exit the foster care system and continue to receive financial support until the child becomes a young adult.

Schuyler Center urges the State to fund the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program as an uncapped permanency option outside of the Foster Care Block Grant to incentivize more counties to use this important permanency option.

RESTORE FUNDING FOR KINSHIP CAREGIVER SERVICES AND THE KINSHIP NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

Hundreds of thousands of children in New York are in informal kinship arrangements,⁵ and a significant number of children enter into direct custody arrangements with kin.² In direct custody arrangements, relatives care for children outside of the foster care system, without financial support. Kinship caregiver programs offer important supports and services to kin, a majority of whom are grandparents, who care for their relatives' children in their household outside of the formal foster care program, and often with extremely limited resources. Kinship caregiver programs provide information about family members' rights, support to meet children's education and health needs, and assistance with obtaining health and social service benefits. For as little as \$510 per child per year, these programs are far less costly than foster care placement.

The New York State Kinship Navigator is a statewide resource and referral network for kinship families, providing information and connections to important resources.

The **Executive Budget** proposes funding for kinship caregiver services at \$338,750. This is a significant cut compared to last year's final budget's \$2.2 million, which included \$1.9 million added by the Assembly.

The **Executive Budget** proposes \$220,500 in funding for the statewide Kinship Navigator information and referral network. This is a significant cut compared to last year's final budget's \$320,500, which included \$100,000 added by the Assembly.

Schuyler Center requests that the Legislature advance a unified, comprehensive kinship navigator service, funded at \$10 million, which would more efficiently provide statewide and regional services, assistance, respite, information, and training to kinship families.

STRENGTHEN THE FOSTER YOUTH COLLEGE SUCCESS INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE IN PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION

Only two to seven percent of foster youth complete a two- or four-year degree.⁶ Yet, the best way to ensure that a youth will secure and retain good-paying employment in adulthood is a college education.⁷

The **Executive Budget** proposes \$7.9 million in funding for the Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYCSI) to support youth in foster care who pursue higher education to graduation. This represents a \$720,000 increase in funding compared to last year's final budget. This \$7.9 million supports hundreds of new students through successful completion of their course of study. More youth avail themselves of FYCSI support each year, and this is a good thing.

Schuyler Center asks the Legislature to maintain the Executive's proposed \$7.9 million to support youth pursuing higher education who either are or have been in foster care.

FUND POST-PERMANENCY SERVICES

The **Executive Budget** includes an investment of \$11 million in funding that comes from adoption assistance savings, for post-permanency (including adoption and guardianship) services. The State's responsibility to children in foster care and families should not end if a child is adopted. Many children who have been in foster care have significant emotional, mental, and behavioral health issues due to childhood trauma, and therefore require additional services and supports. Adoptive parents who are unable to find the appropriate supports their child and family needs may be forced to dissolve their family and place their child in foster care, which hurts families and is more costly to the state.

Schuyler Center urges the Legislature to maintain the Executive's \$11 million for post-adoption services.

EARLY CARE AND LEARNING

It is widely recognized that the earliest years of a child's life are extremely important for health, development, and learning that can last a lifetime. A strong early start is a major predictor of

future success and is particularly important to mitigate disparities in health, education, and other long-term outcomes.⁸

INCREASE INVESTMENT TO STABILIZE THE CHILD CARE SECTOR AND SET NEW YORK ON A PATH TO PROVIDING UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILD CARE

New York's Child Care Landscape

The continuing challenges facing New York families and the child care sector as we enter 2022 cannot be overstated. High-quality child care is the largest monthly bill for families with children, costing an average \$2,047 per month (\$24,564 per year) for two children in a child care center in 2019. Many New York families struggle to find and afford care. According to federal guidance pegging affordability at no more than 7% of family income, child care is unaffordable for most New York families. Under this guidance, a family of two would need an annual income of \$350,914 to “afford” the annual cost of center-based care despite state median income for a family of four being \$100,377.² Yet, due to under-investment in child care for low-income families, it is estimated that fewer than 20% of eligible low-income families who could benefit from receiving child care subsidy assistance from New York State receive it.⁹

At the same time, just as the state is beginning to recover, and parents (many of whom were forced out of the workforce due to school and child care closures) are beginning to go back to work, New York's child care sector is teetering on the edge of collapse. The total capacity for New York's statewide licensed child care capacity has shrunk by 9,500 spots. Many child care providers have credited the stabilization grants from last year's final budget, distributed in six monthly payments, with enabling them to keep their doors open this fall and winter. With monthly payments set to end for most providers in early 2022, the need for a new source of sustained funding to meet the true costs of providing high quality child care is urgent. Child care educators who, in the best of times, struggle to sustain their families on low wages, have faced tremendous challenges as the pandemic has caused many providers to reduce staff or shut down altogether. The median wage for a child care worker in New York in 2020 was \$28,246 per year, or \$14.40 an hour.² Many of these low-wage essential workers have continued to provide care throughout the pandemic, often at great personal risk to themselves and their families.

Child Care in the Executive Budget

Governor Hochul recognized in her State of the State address the need for more access to affordable child care and raise the wages of child care workers. These words capture the pain the lack of child care access has caused too many families during the pandemic – and long before. They also acknowledge the vital role we know child care workers play in the lives of the working families they serve in their communities. Unfortunately, the **Executive Budget** fell far short of meeting these extraordinary challenges, and contains no proposals to begin moving transforming the State's patchwork system to universal care. The only child care relief the Executive Budget offers parents is a very small expansion in the number of income-based subsidies beginning in October 2022; while for the dramatically underpaid workforce, it includes a modest and time-limited wage supplement.

Specifically, the **Executive Budget** proposes a modest increase in child care subsidy funding, the principal public support for families to meet the high costs of quality child care, to \$894.6 million. Those funds are derived from the State General Fund with an investment of \$301.1 million, representing a \$50.1 million increase from last year, \$311.5 million drawn from federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds and \$282 million drawn from federal TANF funds.

The **Executive Budget** proposes to expand child care subsidies to working and otherwise eligible families whose income is 300% of the federal poverty level (FPL) and below 85% State Median Income (SMI) in three years. The expansion will phase in at 225% of the FPL beginning October 16, 2022, 265% of FPL beginning April 1, 2023 and 300% of FPL beginning April 1, 2024. The Executive Budget grants the counties the option to expand subsidies outright to 300% FPL and below 85% State Median Income (SMI) beginning October 16, 2022.

Finally, the **Executive Budget** reports \$2 billion in reappropriated child care funds from last year's enacted budget. In 2020 and 2021, New York received a total of \$2.4 billion from federal COVID-19 child care stimulus funds from the CARES Act, Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. While last year's final budget directed that these funds were to be invested to support specific reforms including expanding access to child care subsidies, capping copayments, and investing in efforts to reduce child care deserts, among others), this Executive Budget does not direct that these reappropriated funds be invested in the manner agreed upon in last year's final budget.

Schuyler Center, and the Empire State Campaign for Child Care and Winning Beginning NY two statewide early childhood coalitions we help lead - request:

- **\$5 billion total investment in child care in the final Enacted Budget, drawing from remaining federal child care and unrestricted stimulus funds, existing federal CCDBG funds (including the significant rollover funds), and state tax revenues to enable New York to take large steps this year toward achieving universal access to child care this year**
- **Of this amount, we request an approximately \$2.8 billion to expand access to families for child care subsidies; \$1.3 billion for workforce supports; and \$600 million to increase child care provider reimbursement rates to come closer to reflecting the true costs of child care. The investments must be directed to each of these three pillars of the system to guard against destabilizing the child care sector or inadvertently harming New York families as we transition to universal.**

EXPAND AND STRENGTHEN EVIDENCE-BASED HOME VISITING

Maternal, infant, and early childhood home visiting is recognized across the nation as a uniquely effective approach to family strengthening, with myriad benefits to children and families' health, well-being and economic security. Home visiting has been proven to improve birth outcomes;¹⁰ increase high school graduation rates for children who received home visiting services while young; increase workforce participation and lower need for public assistance.^{11,12,13}

Maternal, infant, and early childhood home visiting programs are available to fewer than five

percent of families with young children in New York State and entirely unavailable in some areas. A significantly higher investment is needed if New York aims to serve all communities with families in need and endeavor to ensure the best health and developmental outcomes for mothers, infants, and families. This budget is a good step, but more support is needed to reach all the families that can benefit from these services.

Schuyler Center urges the Legislature to support State investment in home visiting to maintain existing programs and expand services to more families. We also urge that additional funding be included to ensure that more families receive needed services. Specifically, to support home visiting programs and infrastructure, we request the following investments:

- **Support the Executive Budget investment of an additional \$11 million in Healthy Families New York. The budget materials state that this funding is expected to provide services to an additional 1,600 families.**
- **Support the \$3 million included in the Executive Budget for Nurse Family Partnership and add an additional \$1.5 million.**
- **Invest \$2 million for ParentChild+ to support sustainability at existing sites.**

STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND ACCESS TO QUALITY AFTER SCHOOL SERVICES

High-quality after school programs provide children and youth with safe, enriching care after school. The importance of after school programs for the well-being our children has become even more apparent during this time of deep uncertainty and stress brought on by the pandemic.

The **Executive Budget** again proposes \$28 million for Advantage After School, \$5 million less than last year's final budget of \$33 million. If the funding is not restored in the final enacted budget, 2,500 to 5,000 children will lose their current Advantage After School programs. The Executive Proposal provides level funding for the Empire State After School Program.

Schuyler Center urges the Legislature to restore \$5 million to the Advantage After School Program, and dedicate a percentage of new revenue streams to increase access to affordable high-quality after school, summer, and expanded learning programs and provide \$169 million to align the afterschool reimbursement rate to reflect the true cost (\$4,300) of providing quality care, including a language amendment to set a higher per student rate for the Empire State After-School Program.

A RECOVERY THAT CENTERS ALL NEW YORK CHILDREN

As New York turns the corner to pandemic recovery, we urge the Legislature and the Governor to pass a 2022-23 Budget that centers our children; prioritizes those communities hit hardest by the pandemic, and the essential workers who saw us through; and uses this moment of rebuilding as an opportunity to build back the systems upon which children and families and all New Yorkers rely to be aligned, coordinated, well-resourced and anti-racist.

Thank you. We appreciate the opportunity to present testimony and look forward to continuing to work with you to build a strong New York.

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