

**TESTIMONY OF
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BEFORE THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

**ON GOVERNOR PATERSON'S DEFICIT REDUCTION
PLAN FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009-10**

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Chairman Kruger and other members of the Senate Finance Committee: my name is Pamela Bennett. I am the Director of Citizen Action of New York City, a statewide membership organization that fights for social, racial, economic and environmental justice with affiliates in seven communities throughout New York State. Citizen Action coordinates the Coalition for After-School Funding (CASF), a statewide coalition with over 300 member groups - consisting of parents, students, after-school providers, law enforcement officials, childcare advocates, faith-based organizations and community groups - that believe that every child in New York State should have access to a quality after-school program. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on the impact on after-school of Governor Paterson's Deficit Reduction Plan (DRP) for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2009-10.

In this time of economic hardship for the state, it is even more critical that cuts not be made to programs that have the greatest impact on low-income people and the most vulnerable in our communities. The Governor's proposed cuts to after-school are a prime example of this, and should be rejected by the Legislature.

The proposed mid-year cuts to after-school are also extremely unwise from the standpoint of raising educational achievement, particularly for at-risk youth. The Governor proposes \$1.9 million in cuts to the Advantage After-School Program (reducing its funding to \$28.6 million this year), and a 10% cut (to \$25.1 million) to the Extended Day/School Violence Prevention Program, programs that have a demonstrable impact in reducing the high school drop out rate and in improving student achievement, particularly for at-risk youth.

The research cannot be clearer concerning the benefits of after-school programs to children, from kindergarten all the way to high school. After-school programs benefit students in the following ways:

- ✓ First, after-school programs help students succeed in school. Research has shown that students who attend after-school programs get better grades, have higher school attendance rates, behave better, and do better on standardized tests.
- ✓ Secondly, after-school programs give students access to art, music and sports. After-school programs provide the access to enrichment programs that many kids don't have during the regular school day.
- ✓ Thirdly, quality after-school programs prevent crime and reduce other risky behaviors and keep kids safe after regular school hours. Violent juvenile crime triples during the after-school hours. After-school programs provide constructive, supervised time, which protects students from becoming crime victims. A survey conducted for Fight Crime: Invest in Kids New York found that teens unsupervised after school were 4 times as likely to have used drugs, 4 times as likely to have smoked cigarettes, and 3 times as likely to have had sex.
- ✓ Finally, after-school programs support working families at all income levels. With nearly 8 in 10 mothers of school-age children working, after-school programs are a big help to working families, providing a safe, supervised environment for children during the after-school hours. In addition, after-school programs increase parental involvement, and provide support to parents transitioning from welfare to work.¹

Despite these benefits, many after-school programs are already in a perilous state. A comprehensive 2009 survey of more than 100 after-school programs found that 40% already are serving fewer youth and families this year. After-school programs are heavily dependent on government funding. For example, fewer than one-third of New York City agencies charge fees due to the economic burden on parents. Agencies often have limited to non-existent cash reserves and many have lost lines of credit due to past funding shortfalls. Therefore, in many if not most cases, programs hit with mid-year state cuts will have to lay off staff or simply close their doors.²

¹ The benefits to children and society alike of after-school are summarized in "The Value of After-School Programs" published by CASF, which is available at www.casf-nys.org.

² See, Testimony of John Alpert, The After-School Corporation, Before the Assembly Ways and Means Committee on Governor Paterson's Deficit Reduction Plan for Fiscal Year 2009-10, October 21, 2009.

In addition, it is certain that programs particularly targeted at at-risk youth and youth from low-income families will be disproportionately affected. The pattern of state and in some cases, city and foundation underfunding has meant that many non-profit providers have been forced to redirect their services to families that can afford to pay fees for services, reducing places for low-income families. Parents - low-income *and* middle-income - will also face the burden of making alternative child-care arrangements mid-year, which in some cases threaten their own employment due to the unavailability of child care for their school-aged children.³

We urge the Legislature to reject the Governor's proposed mid-year cuts of \$2.1 million to Youth Development and Delinquency Prevention (YDDP) and the Special Delinquency Prevention Program (SDDP): programs administered by the Office of Children and Family Services that are targeted respectively at encouraging positive youth development and keeping youth out of the criminal justice system.

I once again thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Citizen Action and the Coalition for After-School Funding. Of course, I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

³ See, *id.*