



**FEDERATION OF PROTESTANT WELFARE AGENCIES**

**TESTIMONY  
of**

**The Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies**

**Before the  
New York City Council General Welfare Committee, Finance Committee  
And Women's Issues Committee**

**Executive Budget Hearing – Fiscal Year 2009-2010**

**May 26, 2009**

**Prepared by:**

**Bich Ha Pham,**

**Director of Policy, Advocacy and Research**

**Nicole Lavan,**

**Senior Policy Analyst for Child Welfare and Workforce Development**

**Liz Accles,**

**Senior Policy Analyst for Income Security and Early Childhood Education**

**Esther W. Y. Lok,**

**Assistant Director of Policy, Advocacy and Research,**

**Senior Policy Analyst HIV/AIDS**

My name is Nicole Lavan and I am the Senior Policy Analyst for Child Welfare and Workforce Development at the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA). For 87 years, FPWA has been a leading policy advocate for individuals and families served by our almost 300 member human service agencies and churches in and around New York City. Our diverse membership includes child care centers, workforce development programs, adoption and foster care agencies, family support programs, after-school programs, nursing homes, AIDS service organizations, Y's and settlement houses. These agencies serve more than 1.5 million New Yorkers. Thus, FPWA promotes the social and economic well-being of greater New York's most vulnerable by strengthening human service organizations and advocating for just public policies.

I would first like to thank the City Council for the opportunity to testify on needed investments that will strengthen vulnerable populations across New York City. Although we understand that the City is facing a very tight fiscal year given the increasingly grim economic situation, we urge the City to ensure that its neediest citizens are protected. It is often these children and families who suffer the most during times of economic crisis.

Today, I will discuss FPWA's budget priorities in the areas of early childhood education, child welfare, income security and workforce development.

### **Early Childhood Education**

Quality early care and education is a vital component of preparing children for future academic achievement and success in later life. Children who have the benefit of a preschool education have a solid foundation to enter school, and they are more likely to graduate from high school, attend college, participate in the workforce, and avoid risky behavior such as drug use and criminal activities.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, as noted by the Mayor's Commission for Economic Opportunity, scarce child care resources in New York City continually affects low-income working families. FPWA agrees with the Commission's 2006 report, which called on New York City to "do all it can" to invest in quality early care and education programs.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Schulman and Barnett, "What Impacts Does Preschool Education Have on Personal Responsibility and Related Social Behavior?," National Institute for Early Education Research, 2006. Available at <http://nieer.org/resources/research/ImpactsOfPreKOnLifeChoices.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> "Increasing Opportunity and Reducing Poverty in New York City," New York City Commission for Economic Opportunity, September 2006.

We would like to highlight some of our key budget priorities in the Early Childhood Education arena:

**Support community-based child care programs with the funding and resources they need to provide high-quality early care programming for New York City's youngest.**

We are deeply concerned that the transfer of kindergarten slots from child care centers to public schools, and the reduction of ACS funding for child care centers operating Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs, will seriously compromise the availability and quality of subsidized care.

Kindergarten attendance in child care centers provides families full day, full year care. Without these programs, many families will have to piece together after school and summer care in order to meet their needs. This will require parents to take time off of work and risk job stability during these precarious economic times. Since the timing of these proposals are late in the school year, we are concerned that many children will only be able to find available kindergarten slots in schools outside of their neighborhoods, thus resulting in the need to bus long distances to school from home.

We are asking that parents be given the option of keeping their children in center based care if the kindergarten classrooms in their neighborhood public school do not have the capacity to accommodate them.

Reductions in ACS funding to centers running Universal Pre- K programs will compromise the quality of care as these funds provide enhancements that enable them to meet quality educational standards.

**FPWA encourages the City to develop a comprehensive vision of early care and education that brings together child care, UPK, and Head Start.**

In order to create a seamless system that truly meets the needs of children and families, the City must work with providers and advocates to address a number of key issues, including but not limited to:

- Ensuring that community-based programs have the funding and technical assistance needed to sustain quality programs,
- Identifying the essential components of a quality early learning experience – such as family and social work supports, highly qualified (and properly compensated) teachers, and facilities and instructional materials that promote child development, and
- Increasing access for parents by identifying and reducing barriers to enrollment and improving outreach.

**Fully restore and baseline \$5 million for full-day Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) in ACS child care programs.**

In recognition of New York’s successful mixed delivery system for pre-kindergarten, FPWA urges the City to fully restore and baseline the \$5 million included in the FY 2008 budget, which was cut in last year’s FY 2009 budget to \$2.6 million, to support full-day UPK programming in ACS contract programs. The provision of full-day pre-k services in settings other than public schools, including ACS community-based programs which can offer extended day and/or year-round services, allows working parents to choose the program that best fits their needs.

**Fully restore and baseline \$1.7 million for family child care supplies**

FPWA urges the City to fully restore and baseline the \$1.7 million included in the FY 2008 budget for the Provider’s Choice initiative, which was cut in last year’s FY 2009 budget to \$1.2 million. This funding enables family child care providers to purchase necessary supplies, including educational toys and games, which allows them to better serve the children in their care.

Although FPWA understands the fiscal constraints as a result of the economic situation, we want to express the great need for increased supports for early care and education centers for infants and toddlers as well as supports for child care networks. With these needs in mind, FPWA encourages the city to:

**Create a funding source to support child care centers in making the facility modifications and equipment purchases necessary to serve infants and toddlers.**

Given the need for subsidized care for infants and toddlers and the availability of open classroom space in some child care centers due to the implementation of Out-of-School Time and other factors, there is an opportunity for centers to serve more children under the age of three. Child care providers who want to take on the care of infants and toddlers need a reliable funding stream that will allow them to purchase supplies and make needed structural improvements, including reconfiguring classroom space and installing age-appropriate equipment.

**Invest in quality early care and education for infants and toddlers.**

New York City is currently experiencing a shortage of subsidized care for infants and toddlers. This serves as a major roadblock to work for parents with children under age three and has serious implications for the financial stability of low-income families. FPWA urges the Mayor and the City Council to invest in the creation of additional slots that would allow publicly-funded child care centers to serve more infants and toddlers.

**Invest in family child care networks and the important services they offer.**

Family child care networks are under contract with the City to recruit providers, offer support services such as training and technical assistance, and make referrals for families in need of care. To provide these services, networks receive a per-child/per-week fee of \$17.06, which is currently paid by family child care providers. This places great financial strain on providers and may discourage them from participating in networks. We urge the City to support networks and providers by funding the full network fee.

**Child Welfare**

Tragedies related to child abuse in the past few years have directed attention to the importance of investing in child welfare services, and remind us all of what can happen if these services are under-funded. Preventive service agencies provide invaluable assistance to families at risk of entering the child welfare system. Almost 40,000 children receive preventive services. Preventive workers are the City's ongoing line of defense, promoting and supporting family stability, but ready to intervene if warranted. In addition, foster care boarding homes remain crucial entities in the child welfare system, and foster parents need all the support we can

provide. Over 16,000 youth are in foster care. The large numbers of children and families receiving services must be fully supported to ensure the child's welfare.

We would like to highlight some of our key budget priorities in the Child Welfare arena:

**Restore proposed 5% cut to foster care administrative rates**

FPWA urges the City to restore the 5% cut to the administrative rate for non-profit agencies operating foster boarding homes proposed in the May 2009 Executive Budget. As it is, foster care agencies are not adequately resourced and this funding reduction will force agencies to make significant cuts in staff and/or services. In these difficult economic times, agencies responsible for serving our City's most vulnerable children and families deserve our support.

**Fully restore and baseline \$4.2 million to reduce preventive caseloads from 15:1 to 12:1**

FPWA urges the Mayor and City Council to fully restore and baseline the \$4.2 million included in the FY 2008 budget for the Child Safety Initiative, which was cut to \$3.7 million in last year's FY 2009 budget. This funding allows preventive services agencies to reduce caseloads from a ratio of 15:1 to 12:1. The 2006 Child Welfare Workload Study published by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services examined the effects of high caseloads on child welfare caseworkers and found that excessive caseloads undermine their ability to provide families with high-quality services. Establishing reasonable caseloads reduces the amount of time caseworkers must devote to demanding administrative duties and increases time spent with children and families, allowing workers to build strong client relationships and to resolve crucial safety issues in an efficient and timely manner.

Furthermore, as ACS moves forward with its "Request-for-Proposals" process ("RFP") for the child welfare system and the system-wide implementation of Improved Outcomes for Children (IOC) slated for June 15, 2009, reduced caseloads for preventive agencies are more important than ever. Preventive services providers and community advocates see many of the system changes, such as increased family-caseworker interaction and support for community coalitions, as steps in the right direction; however, these changes will result in added responsibilities for already overwhelmed caseworkers. For example, reasonable caseloads must be in place if caseworkers are to successfully accommodate new responsibilities associated with Family Team Conferencing, a featured element of the ACS RFP and IOC that requires caseworkers to

meet more frequently with families and community stakeholders as they work to move children more quickly into safe and stable living situations.

Furthermore, as part of IOC's emphasis on preventive services, enhanced services and additional slots are crucial to properly serve these families.

**Restore and baseline \$3.1 million in City funds for preventive service enhancements**

FPWA urges the City to restore and baseline the \$3.1 million last included in the FY 2008 budget to support preventive service enhancements. Targeted at high-need communities, this funding allowed preventive services providers to flexibly and creatively design enhancements to existing high-quality programs. Agencies have used this money to develop preventive programs for those families who need more services than general preventive programs, such as chronically truant teens.

**Restore and baseline \$2.4 million in City funds for additional preventive services slots**

FPWA urges the City to restore and baseline the \$2.4 million last included in the FY 2008 budget to support 1,000 new slots for preventive services. Reports of child abuse and neglect in New York City have been increasing and these additional slots are necessary to meet the demand for preventive services. These services are an essential part of the City's efforts to strengthen and support families in caring for their children and help keep children safely at home when possible.

**Restore proposed 10% cut to foster parent support**

FPWA urges the Mayor to restore the 10% cut in foster parent support funding proposed in the January 2009 Financial Plan. Although this funding reduction only applies to agencies that have not met projected outcomes, we are concerned that any loss in funding will further jeopardize the ability of these agencies to support foster parents, who generously provide caring homes to "hard-to-place" youth. FPWA calls on the City to instead help affected agencies identify strategies for improvement.

## **Income Security**

FPWA has a long-standing commitment to a solid safety net and supports for low income families. We also sponsor the Welfare Reform Network (WRN), a collaborative of New York City advocates, service providers, policymakers, and current and former public assistance recipients. WRN is committed to promoting policy and budget decisions that enhance social welfare and economic justice goals. FPWA and WRN seek to empower people by giving them the tools and opportunities they need to permanently rise out of poverty.

### **Restore funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) – HRA**

We ask the City Council to restore \$2.1 million for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) for food pantries funded through the Human Resources Administration (HRA) that is once again missing from the Mayor's Financial Plan. Emergency Food Programs are experiencing record need, with diminished public and private sources of support. Many do not have enough food to meet the demand, resulting in untold numbers of people turned away from the food source of last resort. The following statistics demonstrate the urgent need for increased EFAP funding:<sup>3</sup>

- There are currently 1,282 Emergency Food Programs (EFPs) in New York City.
- 69% of programs report not having enough food to meet the demand.
- EFPs report a 28% increase of in the number of people requesting services than in 2007, on top of a 20% increase from 2006.
- 87% of programs report an increased demand for emergency food.
- Federal funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) has been severely cut, resulting in a shortage of 12 million pounds of food in NYC in the last year alone.

We also urge the City Council to restore \$491,000 for the HIV/AIDS Nutrition programs administered by the Momentum Project. This program is specifically designed to meet the nutrition needs of those who are living with HIV/AIDS. The proposed cuts will not only lead to termination of staff and closing of service locations, it will also result in 4333 fewer congregate hot meals and 25,559 fewer take home meals to be provided. As the HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to disproportionately impact communities of color, particularly in low-income

---

<sup>3</sup>Annual New York City Hunger Survey. New York City Coalition Against Hunger 2008; available at: [www.nyccah.org](http://www.nyccah.org).

neighborhoods, allocating adequate funding to this program is an important effort to ensure persons living with HIV/AIDS receive supports to meet their basic needs.

**Expand the Job Training Participant (JTP) program to create 1,500 new positions for Welfare Recipients – HRA**

We also ask the City Council to add \$15.9 million in funding for the Job Training Participant (JTP) program to create 1,500 new positions for welfare recipients. As a transitional jobs model, JTP positions offer a paid work experience with regular education, training and skills development. FPWA recommends the expansion of this program beyond the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Sanitation, and more recently the Human Resources Administration, and into the following City agencies with demonstrated career pathways: 1) Health and Hospitals Corporation, 2) Department of Education, and 3) Department of Citywide Administrative Services.

In addition to offering more JTP positions, FPWA also urges HRA to make significant policy changes to increase overall access to education and training for public assistance recipients, helping people gain access to jobs that lift them and their families out of poverty permanently. Though the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) directed all local districts to increase the numbers engaged in education and training activities by 20% by January 2009, based on the HRA Local Employment Plan for 2008-09, the agency planned to adjust its reporting of participants already enrolled in education or training, rather than expand opportunities to those not currently engaged. It is thus not surprising that between September 2007 and November 2008, there was a 563 person drop in the number of NYC welfare recipients in vocational education/job skills training.

In addition, changes in the Final TANF Rule, which take effect on October 1, 2008, allow participation in four-year and advanced degree programs to count within the definition of "Vocational Educational Training," along with one hour of unsupervised homework for each hour of classroom time. Therefore, HRA should greatly expand efforts to link more individuals to education opportunities and take full advantage of the changes in the federal rules.

**Workforce Development**

FPWA has recently expanded its Policy, Advocacy and Research department to create a workforce development portfolio dedicated to expanding the education, training, job preparation, and career advancement needs of low-income households. We are particularly concerned about those populations often underserved by existing workforce systems. This includes those facing greater barriers to economic security, such as welfare recipients, low-skill and low-income working adults, single parents, disconnected youth, previously incarcerated individuals, immigrants, those with limited English proficiency, domestic violence survivors, and people with disabilities, mental health and/or substance abuse issues.

We urge HRA to work in closer collaboration with the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), the Department of Small Business Services (SBS), and CUNY to expand welfare recipients' access to the following: Adult Literacy Services, including adult basic education, ESL, and GED preparation classes; services offered by the Workforce 1 Career Centers, including Individual Training Account (ITA) vouchers for training, job placement and career advancement services; and opportunities to enroll in two-year and four-year degree programs at CUNY schools, particularly those that offer specialized academic and career counseling services and accommodate the schedules of non-traditional students.

FPWA also urges the City Council to make an investment in Contextualized Adult Literacy programs that blend basic literacy with vocation-specific training, often through the use of technology and collaborative teaching methods. These programs have proven effective in accelerating participants' progress on their career path, particularly for those with limited English proficiency, who can learn speaking, reading and writing skills in the context of training for a particular trade. These classes should be made available to welfare recipients, particularly since they provide an opportunity for them to participate in an educational activity as a core activity for up to 12 months, since it clearly fits within the definition of "Vocational Educational Training." Expanding access to contextualized adult literacy classes for welfare recipients would also help us achieve the 30% statewide maximum number of recipients that can be engaged in this activity at any given time.

### **HIV and AIDS**

The HIV infection rate in New York City is spreading at three times the national rate. FPWA believes that prevention, treatment and care, housing and supportive services (such as legal and nutrition programs) are vital components of a quality and comprehensive health care

system to address the complex health needs of people living with HIV/AIDS. Considering that over 75% of all living HIV and AIDS cases in New York State are found in New York City and that the epidemic continues to disproportionately impact people of color in low-income communities, FPWA calls on the Mayor and the City Council to continue the promise to reduce HIV infection rates by preserving and allocating sufficient funds to all existing HIV and AIDS services.

**FPWA strongly opposes the Mayor's proposal to reduce \$1.8 million for HIV/AIDS contracted case management staff.** Case management services provided by contracted community-based organizations are of a different nature than those provided by HASA. Case management provided by HASA is basically public benefits screening. Case management provided by community-based organizations (CBOs), however, is designed to help prevent eviction and to provide support to clients that are necessary for their medical treatment adherence. For instance, CBOs' case managers often receive and respond to clients' calls after office hours and on the weekends.

According to the NYC HIV/AIDS Housing Needs Assessment, about 80% of people with AIDS surveyed reported a history of co-occurring mental health and substance use issues. Elimination of case management provided by CBOs in reality means eliminating the "supportive" part of this supportive housing program, which is supposed to help people remain linked to care. It is estimated that approximately 2,180 clients in Scatter Site 1 units and 1,819 clients in permanent congregate units, along with 1,000 clients in HASA NY/NY III units will be impacted by this funding cut. FPWA calls upon the Mayor and the City Council to restore \$1.8 million for case management for HASA-contracted supportive housing.

### **Conclusion**

We thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your historical commitment to making restorations to vital programs and services for New York City's most vulnerable residents and low-income communities. We hope that you will seriously consider our budget priorities and concerns about the Mayor's Proposed Budget for FY 2010 when making decisions during this year's budget negotiation process.