



FEDERATION OF PROTESTANT WELFARE AGENCIES

Testimony for the March 8, 2007 Hearing  
of the  
New York City Council's Youth Services Committee

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Good Afternoon. My name is Kathy Fitzgibbons and I am the Senior Policy Analyst for Youth Services from the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies. I would like to thank the Youth Services Committee and its Chairperson, Councilmember Fidler for the opportunity to testify today.

FPWA is an alliance of more than 300 human service agencies and churches providing social services to city residents of every age, religion and race. Our diverse membership includes child care centers, after-school programs, adoption and foster care agencies, family support programs, nursing homes, senior day care centers, mental health clinics, Y's and settlement houses. In combination, these agencies serve more than two million New Yorkers. Among FPWA's membership are 70 agencies that provide services to youth throughout New York City.

FPWA believes that parents deserve safe, affordable, and quality out of school time programs for their children. FPWA advocates for appropriate access to after school, job and skill building opportunities, and delinquency prevention services for low-income youth that supplements their regular K-12 school curriculum. We contend that youth services programs are essential to develop the academic, vocational, employability and life skills of young people.

We applaud the Mayor for his support of the following initiatives and programs:

- **First, we are pleased with the support that the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) has received at both the City and State levels.** We are fortunate that the funds were baselined for this critical program in the 2006-07 legislative season and were very encouraged the program has received a recommended increase in the 2007-08 Governor's Executive Budget. We would ask for your support in ensuring 42,000 New York City youth are able to participate in the program this year. SYEP allows young people the opportunity to gain valuable work skills. The jobs filled by youth are very important because they help staff summer day care and day camp programs offered to community members. The wages

they earn are generally used to pay for clothes, school supplies and other expenses that are purchased in their communities.

- **FPWA commends the Mayor for adding over \$22 million in Out of School Time (OST) funding.** OST programs offer a balanced mix of academic support, sports and recreational activities. The arts and cultural experiences are critical for youth and provides them with an enriching array of programming. This increase in funding is to be applauded and is an important step in building a comprehensive OST system. Twenty-five FPWA member agencies provide these critical services to youth and we appreciate the support the Mayor has shown for this initiative.
- **FPWA commends the Mayor for including \$9.4 million for youth internships in response to recommendations from the Commission for Economic Opportunity.** This funding will provide for twelve-week internships for 1,400 disconnected youth. Paid internships provide valuable opportunities to learn career-related skills, improve workplace behavior and develop contacts. **We urge the Department for Youth and Community Development to incorporate wrap-around services to help youth overcome barriers to completion of these internships.**

We stand in concert with our colleagues on the Youth Alliance and support the following restorations:

**Beacon Programs:** We ask the City Council to restore and baseline \$4 million in funding for Beacon programs. There are currently 80 Beacon programs, serving over 180,000 children and adults every year. Beacons provide communities with safe havens in the non-school hours where thousands of children, parents and other residents gather daily for stimulating learning activities, support and fun.

**City Council Discretionary Funding:** Restore \$7.7 million to the City Council Discretionary funds to support over 1,000 community-based organizations that provide youth programming. This funding goes to smaller community based organizations for sports and arts and after-school initiatives.

**Drug Prevention, Runaway and Homeless Youth and Youthlink Initiatives:** We support the Drug Prevention, Runaway and Homeless Youth and Youthlink initiatives to provide safe and structured services to prevent drug use and homelessness. It is vital to protect runaway and homeless youth and, where reunification is not possible, the programs help youth progress from crisis to independent living situations. We ask the City Council to restore \$2.63 million to sustain these programs that are critical and assist youth in becoming healthy, caring and responsible adults.

**Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI):** Restore \$9.25 million in funding for the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI). This program supports both current and new English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, legal services for recent immigrants to assist with applications for citizenship or permanent residency, and legal services for immigrants that focus specifically on wage and hour disputes and other workplace issues.

Finally, **FPWA urges the Council and the Mayor to restore and baseline \$500,000 to DYCD's budget for food pantries.** More than 10 percent of New Yorkers experience food insecurity and 2 million eat at the more than 3,000 food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters every year.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.