



Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies

**Statement Prepared for
the February 6, 2008 Hearing of the
Assembly Ways And Means Committee and Senate Finance Committee
on the
2008 - 2009 Executive Budget Proposal for Health and Medicaid**

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The Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA) is an alliance of almost 300 human service agencies and churches providing services to more than 1.5 million New York City and State residents of every age, religion and race. Our diverse membership includes child care centers, youth development programs, foster care agencies, senior day care centers, AIDS service organizations, health and mental health clinics, and settlement houses. Throughout the years, FPWA has championed humane health and social welfare policies and fought for expanded resources for the most disenfranchised communities. Our mission is to promote the social and economic well-being of greater New York's most vulnerable by strengthening human service organizations and advocating for just public policies.

FPWA applauds the Executive Budget's investments in human services programs. In a very challenging fiscal environment, Governor Spitzer has demonstrated a continuing commitment to our most vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens and we would strongly urge the Legislature to reaffirm its commitment to the economic security, health care and social services needs of the disadvantaged communities. **We support the Governor's proposed expansions of Child Health Plus, automatic extension of Medicaid eligibility to former foster youth, creation of an EPIC prescription drug discount program for non-Medicaid-eligible low-income New Yorkers of any age and the increase of public assistance payments to households with special needs individuals who receive SSI payments.**

This written testimony will address the Governor's budget proposals in the areas of: 1) HIV and AIDS and 2) Elderly Welfare.

HIV and AIDS

FPWA is pleased to see the Governor's commitment to HIV and AIDS prevention education by appropriating resources to the Comprehensive Hepatitis C Program, HIV/AIDS Related Risk Reduction Program and Retention in Care in Communities of Color. We thank the Governor for including the COLA increase for workers in a number of HIV and AIDS treatment and service programs funded through the AIDS Institute. With the proposed increase of \$2.4 million for New York/New York Supportive Housing Agreement, we hope to see more housing units be made available for persons living with HIV and AIDS.

Last year, the Governor appropriated additional funds in the amount of \$563,000 for community-based organizations to provide permanency planning and support services for families affected by HIV in neighborhoods with high concentrations of at-risk populations as

well as an additional grant of \$575,000 for community service programs (CSPs) and \$575,000 for multi service agencies (MSAs) operating in high-risk areas. Both CSPs and MSAs play a critical role in engaging hard-to-reach populations in HIV prevention education and testing efforts. **FPWA urges the Governor to restore additional funds to CSPs and MSAs.**

Recognizing that HIV and AIDS continues to disproportionately impact communities of color and that a community-based HIV and AIDS care delivery system is essential, FPWA supports the New York State AIDS Advisory Council and **recommends allocating \$2 million to support comprehensive culturally competent HIV/AIDS services for communities of color across New York State.**

In an effort to effectively utilize Medicaid funds, FPWA has learned that the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) is considering requiring all Medicaid beneficiaries, including persons living with HIV and AIDS, to enroll in managed care plans. This would mean amending the 1996 Managed Care Bill of Rights, which was created as a result of the widespread failure of HMOs and managed care plans to ensure adequate and experienced HIV specialists in their networks. FPWA is concerned about the use of managed care as a universal approach for those who have complex health care needs like HIV and AIDS and that patients' choice to join a managed care plan, HIV SNP or to stay in traditional Medicaid fee-for-service will be eliminated. Before any attempt is made to implement mandatory managed care enrollment, **FPWA recommends establishing a taskforce that is composed of various stakeholders** to gauge evidence of improved health outcomes and to assure that quality, standard and coordination of care is being routinely provided to people living with HIV and AIDS who are currently enrolled in managed care.

Elderly Welfare

FPWA is grateful that the Governor has allocated \$1 million to implement an enriched social adult day services demonstration project to maintain elderly persons in the community. We believe it is critical for social adult day agency personnel to be able to provide an array of enriched services to seniors who attend their programs including assistance with toileting, mobility, transferring and eating, medication dispensing by an R.N., case management, and restorative and maintenance therapies. It is important that social adult day providers are able to offer these additional services to the elderly in order to prevent premature placement in adult day health service programs and nursing homes. **Persons**

who are 85 years or older are the fastest growing portion of the older adult population. FPWA believes cost-effective and affordable services, such as enriched social adult day care, is essential to meeting the future needs of this expanding target group.

FPWA appreciates the inclusion of \$4 million in the Executive Budget for four new initiatives designed to assist the elderly and their caregivers including:

- Targeted Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly Program (Targeted EISEP) totaling \$2.5 million
- Regional Caregiver Centers of Excellence and Direct Respite for Caregivers for \$950,000
- The Community Empowerment Initiative for \$275,000
- Development of a Web-Based Reporting System for \$275,000

FPWA strongly supports and appreciates the Governor's commitment to including a \$4.8 million increase in the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) appropriation for workers in the Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly Program (EISEP), Community Services for the Elderly Program (CSE), and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Additionally, we applaud the Governor by continuing funding for:

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| • Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) | \$2.2 million |
| • Neighborhood NORCs | \$2.2 million |
| • Transportation | \$1 million |
| • Sustainable Transportation | \$250,000 |
| • Social Model Adult Day Services | \$947,000 |

These programs provide important services to the elderly who wish to remain in the comfort of their own homes and in the community for as long as possible, averting premature institutionalization. With the projected growth of the elderly population throughout future years, it is gratifying to see support for these critical initiatives. In addition to the funding that has been allocated for transportation totaling the \$1 million noted above, **we would ask that the \$1 million that was allocated last year for senior vans be restored.** In order to meet the increased need for vehicle operating expenses for elderly service providers, we request an additional \$8 million for these essential expenses as costs for insurance and fuel continue to increase.

Due to the dramatic increase in the older adult population, **FPWA urges the Governor to appropriate additional funding of \$4.5 million to provide innovative**

geriatric mental health services as well as education and training programs for primary care physicians in the identification and treatment of depression among older adults.

Last but not least, FPWA is pleased to see the Executive Budget authorized the pass through of the annual federal COLA for the Supplemental Security Income Program (SSI). However, New York State's portion of the SSI benefit is not indexed to inflation and has only been increased once since 1989. SSI is a critical program that provides a monthly income to poor elderly, disabled and visually impaired individuals of any age. FPWA asks the Governor to consider increasing the NYS portion of the SSI benefit.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.