

February 24, 2011

Honorable Andrew Cuomo  
Governor of New York  
Executive Chamber  
Albany, NY 12224

RE: Funding for home visiting programs

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As someone who has spent over 30 years seeking ways to improve children's life outcomes through the replication of high quality and well-researched child abuse prevention programs, I was disappointed to see that funding for home visitation programs was not fully restored in the 21-day amendments. Healthy Families New York (HFNY), Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) and Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP) are currently at-risk because of their inclusion in the Primary Prevention Incentive Program (PPIP) proposed in the 2011 Executive Budget. Although budget reductions in tough economic times are inevitable, this type of reductions is a poor policy choice both from a social impact perspective as well as a cost perspective.

Years of basic and applied research support investments in well-crafted and carefully implemented early intervention efforts. HFNY, NFP and PCHP have demonstrated the ability to improve parent-child relationships, parental capacity and efficacy, maternal and child health, children's school performance, and maternal life choices. Over time, these individual benefits translate into substantial societal savings on health care, education, and welfare expenditures.

Home visitation is not the singular solution for preventing child abuse, improving a child's developmental trajectory, or establishing a strong and nurturing parent-child relationship. However, the empirical evidence generated so far does support the efficacy of the model and its growing capacity to achieve its stated objectives with an increasing proportion of new parents. Maintaining this upward trend will require continued investment in proven programs, not a reduction in their availability.

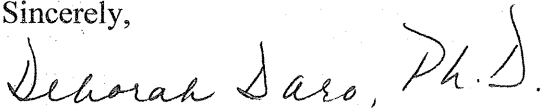
HFNY, as well as the other models at risk, are nationally recognized early home-based interventions because they have been designed, implemented and assessed with high quality

and academic rigor. In the case of HFNY, state planners designed this intervention around a set of best practice principles and then carefully monitored its implementation to insure high fidelity to these standards. Program managers secured funding from other sources to support ongoing evaluation and to assess long term outcomes. The state evaluation team has repeatedly published their findings in peer review journals and presented them at numerous conferences, thereby impacting performance in other states. Finally, the state managers have used these findings to alter their practice to achieve more robust outcomes. One could not ask more from a social service program.

Several years ago I had the opportunity to testify at a hearing held by the U.S. House of Representatives' Ways and Means committee in support of the President's proposed investment in evidence-based home visitation programs. HFNY, NFP and PCHP were among a handful of programs with compelling evidence of success and with a research portfolio that met the most rigorous research standards. In tough economic times, it is essential that policy makers give priority to programs proven to be effective. These evidence-based home visitation programs are worthy of public investment based on their ability to achieve the types of positive outcomes for children which I know you value.

I recognize the very difficult decisions you face and that none of the options on the table are ideal. However, investing in evidence based models is an important first step in becoming better stewards of the public's resources. I urge you to reconsider your investment priorities and hope that the Legislature will see fit to restore funding for HFNY and other programs targeting new parents and their young children.

Sincerely,



Deborah Daro, Ph.D.  
Research Fellow (Associate Professor)

cc: Kristin Proud, Speaker Sheldon Silver, Senator Dean Skelos, Senator Diane Savino, Assembly Member Amy Paulin, Senator John DeFrancisco, Assemblyman Herman Farrell