

Press Release

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New York Not-for-Profits Urge Leaders to Restore Vetoes and Not Break their Promise

(Albany, NY) Three weeks ago, Governor Paterson vetoed discretionary funding (member items) that many non-profits receive to provide critical services. These vetoes eliminated committed funds that were appropriated in previous years that many not-for-profits were depending on and had already budgeted. Numerous statewide organizations representing non-profits across the state joined together today to urge Governor David Paterson, the Assembly and Senate to restart 3-way budget negotiations in order to rescind some or all of the cuts and to emphasize the importance of restoring the vetoes that have many of these not-for-profits on the chopping block.

“These funds are not pork. It is a disservice to these programs and services to continue to call them pork. The vetoed items are critically important services in communities throughout this state which were allocated in previous budgets. For the Governor to veto reappropriated funds is unheard of. It will result in many non-profits being unable to provide services to those in desperate need and will result in job losses in the sector across the state,” said **Ron Deutsch, Executive Director of New Yorkers for Fiscal Fairness.** “Our leaders need to restore these funds and maintain their commitments to needy New Yorkers and the organizations that serve them.”

The vetoes cut funding for human services of all kinds, including senior services, afterschool programs, domestic violence, college access programs, mental health services, youth services, homeless services, veterans services, libraries and more. “We are pleased to stand with our friends and colleagues in the human services community to call upon the Governor, Assembly and Senate to reach a three-way agreement that restores these funds. The vetoes will result in the loss of more than \$100,000 anticipated by Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and nearly \$80,000 for Catholic Charities of Albany. Additionally, over 150 parish-based programs, which had been assured of funding in last year’s budget will not receive a penny of those funds, if these vetoes stand,” **stated Earl Eichelberger, Director for Catholic Charities at the NYS Catholic Conference.**

“Libraries and library systems are busier than ever as families look to save money by using the free educational and cultural resources at the library, and the unemployed have made libraries their go-to place for job searches and resume-writing assistance. The Legislature needs to pass the ELFA Article VII bill so state aid can flow to libraries and library systems and restore as much funding as possible,” said **Michael J. Borges, Executive Director of the New York Library Association.**

Not-for-profit workers have been holding their breath in anticipation of their organizations receiving the funding that was promised. **Michele McKeon, CEO, NYS Coalition Against Domestic Violence** stated, “Domestic violence programs work with people in crisis and provide mandated domestic violence services through contracts with the local social services district and

other state agencies. These are agencies that have inflexible budgets and do not have the means to go without reimbursement for the services they provide. NYSCADV is calling on State leaders to honor their obligations and restore the member items that were vetoed. These vetoes are of items that were promised in previous budgets and the state must honor its commitment.

"The Governor's vetoes for member items will impact vital programs and services provided to low-income New Yorkers across this state. These funds are vital resources that are used to fill gaps and provide needed services. These vetoes will strain the capacity of non-profits even further. Combining this with the dramatic cuts already agreed to and the unprecedented delays in payments to nonprofits will put even more strain on a stressed system of services providers," said **Denise Harlow, President and CEO of the NYS Community Action Association.**

Brittany R. Allen, Executive Director, New York AIDS Coalition said, "The unnecessary delay in passing a state budget is not simply a political inconvenience for lawmakers, but is a potential catastrophe with real human costs. In this time of fiscal uncertainty in Albany, social service agencies are forced to slash programs just to stay afloat, while some are on the brink of going out of business all together. New Yorkers in need of those services are finding themselves without a safety net to assist them in their most critical hour. Worse, the economic crisis has led to more New Yorkers in need of such services, while the state government's response has simply been to cut and delay. The taxpayer money for these programs is not 'pork', but rather lifesaving services that help the most vulnerable New Yorkers."

Lauri Cole, Executive Director, New York State Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare (a statewide membership association representing non-profit agencies that provide mental health and substance abuse services) stated that, "Over the years, a failure to adequately reimburse human service agencies for the true costs associated with doing business has resulted in our members becoming extremely creative in obtaining funds. Member items often fund necessities including roof repairs on older buildings where a mental health program is located, or the expansion of a satellite program into a remote location within a community where services would otherwise not be available."

According to **Carmelita Cruz, Esq. of Housing Works**, "Eliminating vital resources for poor people living with AIDS and HIV throughout New York State will only serve to exacerbate this epidemic and ground to a screeching halt the progress that we have made here to slow down the number of new infections and transmissions. Both the Governor and the Legislature must reconsider the cuts made through the Governor's veto of various legislative adds and rectify their elimination."

Cissy Elm of American Indian Community House was also worried. "The American Indian Community House has four sites statewide that service Native communities. With the severe budget cuts to our contracts as well as the Community of Color money being cut, our program will not be able to maintain all four sites. Our site at Akwesasne (the Mohawk Nation) has been left vacant, which means that one Native community is without services. With another cut looming in the future more cuts will have to be made, which means other Native communities will be affected." Many Native Americans at high risk for HIV/STI do not know their status. **The percentage of all late HIV diagnosis among Native Americans is 1.6 to 2.2 times greater than among any other ethnic group in New York State.**

“The line item vetoes issued by Governor Paterson on July 7, 2010, hit a wide range of services and programs that are essential to the well-being of the state’s residents and its economy,” said **Frank Mauro of the Fiscal Policy Institute**. “As with his earlier effort to unilaterally impose a one day a week furlough on state employees, the Governor seems to think that cutting essential services—and the jobs of the people that provide those services—during a recession will hurt the economy less than temporary increases in progressive taxes. Nothing could be further from economic reality.”

The State legislature is expected to come back into session this week to continue working on the budget, which is already fifteen weeks past due. Representatives of the rally are planning a week of State actions and public events to give thousands of New Yorkers a platform to be heard during budget negotiations.