



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE ON THE FUTURE OF
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT / DELINQUENCY PREVENTION (YDDP), THE SUMMER
YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SYEP) AND THE IMPACT OF POTENTIAL
MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE ON THESE PROGRAMS

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Our thanks to Senator Smith and the other members of the Social Services Committee for the opportunity to present testimony to you today regarding the State Budget proposals for FY 2013-14 and their effect on Youth Development and Delinquency Prevention/Special Delinquency Prevention Programs and Summer Youth Employment.

Youth Development and Delinquency Prevention / Special Delinquency Prevention Program

Youth Development and Delinquency Prevention / Special Delinquency Prevention Program (YDDP / SDPP) funding has supported the operation of youth bureaus across New York State—including a multitude of youth development programs from summer recreation to workforce preparation to pregnancy prevention to mentoring to afterschool programs—and the Out-of-School-Time afterschool program in New York City. YDDP and SDPP are based on the proven premise that youth without access to safe, engaging, supervised activities are more likely to be caught up in delinquent behavior, leading to greater costs to the state and a loss of positive options for many of those youth as they reach adulthood. YDDP and SDPP were cut by 50% in the FY2011-12 State Budget, with a correspondingly drastic reduction in services to youth.

The Executive Budget proposes to combine these two funding streams into a single Youth Development Program (YDP). We recognize the potential administrative efficiencies to be gained from this consolidation, particularly as the reductions in SDPP have left it a comparatively small program at \$3.5 million.

Recommendations

NYSAN supports the recommendations of its partner, the Association of New York State Youth Bureaus, that certain clarifications be made to the language related to this consolidated program. We also support their recommendation that the funding stream be increased by \$1.28 million so that program funding remains constant for the next calendar year (YDDP/SDPP grants run on a calendar year, not the state fiscal year).

Specifically, we recommend that:

- That county youth bureaus, and, in New York City, the Department of Youth and Community Development, be explicitly designated as the recipients of state funds and the entities overseeing the disbursement of funds to contracted not-for-profits;

Promoting young people's safety, learning, and healthy development outside the traditional classroom.

- That city, town, and village youth bureaus or other appropriate city, town, and village representatives for localities without a youth bureau be explicitly given a role in the annual comprehensive planning process conducted by the counties to establish the use of these funds;
- Allow the comprehensive plans for the 2014 calendar year to contain spending related to the transition between YDDP/SDPP and YDP;
- Authorize a report to the Legislature on the implementation of YDP, including the distribution formula;
- Assure that the Runaway and Homeless Youth program remains entirely separate from YDP and is not affected by any changes made in the consolidation of YDDP/SDPP.

Additionally, we recommend that YDP remain focused on serving all youth in need, not just those identified as at-risk for delinquency. While SDPP has traditionally focused specifically on engaging youth at-risk for delinquency, YDDP has historically been broader in its reach. We are concerned that YDP could be construed as having a narrower focus, which could chip away at this funding stream's importance as one of the state's few prevention-focused funding streams. Particularly as the effects of the recession continue to linger, safe, affordable options for their children are important to many working families, regardless of whether they meet common definitions of being high risk. We hope that the Legislature will state clearly that the state should continue through YDP to support enrichment and development opportunities for all youth in need of a safe place to go. Almost any child becomes an at-risk child when they are left unsupervised for extended periods of time.

Summer Youth Employment

Summer Youth Employment (SYEP) dollars are a double investment in youth by the state. Working as staff for summer programs for younger children is the most common work assignment for SYEP participants, so SYEP allows summer programs to serve more children while supporting older youths in their transition to the workforce. While we are fully supportive of a minimum wage increase, as we know the importance of a livable wage for the students and families our programs work with, we are concerned about the consequences of a minimum wage increase for summer programs for youth if there is not a corresponding increase in funding for SYEP.

Almost 50% of SYEP placements in New York City are in summer programs. Comprehensive data for Upstate counties is less available, but available data and anecdotal reports suggest that similar ratios can be found across the state. Since students age 16 and older count in the state-mandated staffing ratios for summer youth programs, SYEP dollars allow tens of thousands of younger children the opportunity to attend a summer program every year.

Summer program placements are ideal for SYEP students working at their first jobs, as the senior staff's youth development background makes them well-positioned to mentor and guide youth entering the workforce. Such placements also allow for innovative programs like those run by Child and Adolescent Treatment Services (CATS) in Buffalo. SYEP students participate in CATS' academic summer program, offered in partnership with a local high

school, and receive one or two credits toward graduation through morning classes. They then go to their summer camp worksites for the afternoon, having also received additional training on working with younger students and daily job skills mentoring from CATS.

While we are fully supportive of the proposed minimum wage increase, funding for SYEP should also correspondingly increase to ensure that at least as many youth are able to work this summer as worked last summer. Raising the minimum wage to \$8.75 will mean an estimated \$12.5 million increase in the overall cost of the program. We ask that the State consider returning funding to the \$35 million level of FY 2008-09 so that there is enough state support that all counties can continue to offer SYEP to as many youth as worked last summer. Doing so will maintain this important pathway for assisting youth to enter the workforce and maintain support for summer programming for younger students.

The minimum wage increase will also impact summer programs seeking to hire staff outside the SYEP program. Summer camps and other summer recreation and enrichment programs typically hire many young adults to work with younger students, and they will see their hiring costs increase with the minimum wage increase. This will make SYEP even more important to community organizations trying to provide sufficient affordable summer programming for low-income children, and thus increases our concerns around SYEP serving a decreasing number of youth.

In general, we recommend that the Senate Social Services Committee and the rest of the Legislature be mindful of the impacts of the minimum wage increase on afterschool and summer programs as they consider whether to increase allocations for these funding streams.

The New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) is a public-private partnership dedicated to promoting young people's safety, learning, and healthy development by increasing the quality and availability of programs available outside the traditional classroom. The positions taken and statements set forth in this document do not necessarily represent the views of all NYSAN members.