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Funding for Advantage After School Must Be Restored to \$22.3 Million in NYS Budget Community Leaders Say Program Must Be Restored to Prevent Students from Losing Afterschool Care

Albany, NY—The NYS Network for Youth Success joined with families and afterschool organizations across the state to call on Governor Cuomo and the State Legislature to **restore funding for the Advantage After School Program to \$22.3 million**. The FY18-19 Executive Budget proposal reduced funding for Advantage After School to \$17.3 million. A reduction of this size would cause more than 3,600 students to lose access to afterschool care.

“The State Budget must reflect a strong commitment to the promise of our children,” said Bernie Kimberg, Chief Operating Officer, Westchester Jewish Community Services. “We are counting on the Governor and the State Legislature to restore \$5 million to ensure that Advantage After School Programs – like those in Mount Vernon, Yonkers, Dobbs Ferry and Peekskill – are able to continue to serve students and their families.”

“Failure to fund the next round of five-year contracts for Advantage After School would be devastating to the Elmont community,” said Pat Boyle, Executive Director of Gateway Youth Outreach on Long Island. “Some families will be forced to leave children as young as six years old home alone or abandon their jobs. Parents will have to resort to public assistance to provide for their families. These scenarios are far more costly than maintaining the state’s investment in Advantage After School.”

“Advantage After School supports afterschool opportunities across the state, including programs in Troy and Rensselaer,” said Lynn Siebert, Executive Director of Childcare and Day Camp at the Capital District YMCA. “These unique programs provide tutoring and literacy assistance that is often not available in other settings. Our students are more successful in completing their homework and developing strong study habits that lead to academic success. Consistent participation in afterschool programs has been shown to lower the achievement gap between high and low income students.”

“Wait lists for afterschool programs are often long – and are likely to get longer if state funding for Advantage After School is cut,” said Chris Dandino, Director of the Greater Rochester After-School Alliance, who pointed out that Rochester, Syracuse, Auburn and Fulton have Advantage After School programs. “Cuts to Advantage After School could impact approximately 500 kids in the Rochester area. Studies show that we only have the capacity to serve 31% of the youth in need of afterschool programming in the City of Rochester. We need to build up afterschool programs and support children and working families to ensure a strong future for our state.”

“Advantage After School funds programs vital to children and families in Buffalo, Niagara Falls and Jamestown,” said Shane A. Monroe, Director of After School Programs at the YWCA of Jamestown. “The Governor’s proposed reduction to Advantage After School puts 3,600 students across the state at risk of losing their afterschool programs, including 115 children at the YWCA of Jamestown.”

Advantage After School supports safe, affordable afterschool programs in underserved communities. Participants receive supervised academic and developmental support during the time when school has ended but most parents are still working - the peak hours of juvenile crime. The program was funded at \$22.3 million in the FY16-17 NYS Budget, but has been reduced by \$5 million in each of the Governor’s past two budget proposals. Last year, the Legislature restored \$2.5 million of that funding in the final budget.

“More than 1.1 million children in New York still lack access to high quality afterschool programs,” said Kelly Sturgis, Executive Director of the New York State Network for Youth Success. “With so many at-risk students in need of afterschool supervision and academic assistance, this is not the time to be cutting programs. The Governor and the Legislature must restore funding for Advantage After School to \$22.3 million in the FY18-19 budget.”

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About The New York State Network for Youth Success

The New York State Network for Youth Success is dedicated to building a youth-serving system that increases the quality and availability of afterschool and expanded learning programs. The Network for Youth Success supports all programs that promote young people’s intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development outside the traditional school day. These programs include those that serve youth in kindergarten through 12th grade, take place in schools and/or in community-based settings, and occur before and after school, during weekends, holidays, and summer breaks, or during the school day through partnerships with community organizations.

The Network for Youth Success convenes partners and coordinates them around a common agenda focused on partnership development, policy development, and capacity building. The network connects practice with policy across a broad range of state, regional, and local partners that represent the afterschool, expanded learning, community schools, and youth development fields broadly.

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