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Final State Budget Falls Short on Afterschool

Albany, NY – March 31, 2014 – Despite a huge demand for afterschool opportunities across New York, with an estimated 1.1 million children in need of afterschool program, and Governor Andrew Cuomo's initial proposal to provide new afterschool programs for 100,000 students, today's final State Budget makes no real commitment to new statewide afterschool funding.

"We know that high-quality afterschool programs can change lives. It is tremendously disappointing that the final State Budget fails to commit to a larger investment in these crucial opportunities for all our students across the state, as had initially been proposed by the Governor," said **Nora Niedzielski-Eichner, Executive Director of the New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN)**.

Afterschool programs keep kids safe while inspiring them to learn through hands-on activities and positive mentoring relationships. High-quality programs help children to identify and develop areas of interest—the kind of passionate pursuits that college admissions offices look for in applicants. Research shows afterschool programs also improve school attendance and help reduce behavior problems. This translates into higher achievement and higher graduation rates.

In his Executive Budget, Governor Andrew Cuomo had proposed \$160 million in new state funding for afterschool programs starting in 2015-16, allowing 100,000 more students to participate next year. The Governor's plan called for a five year funding commitment with planned increases, beginning to address the need for afterschool care for the 1.1 million children who currently lack access. Unfortunately, the final State Budget commits those funds to other purposes.

Michael Weiner, President of the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County, said, "While we were excited by the opportunity that the Governor's proposal created to expand afterschool state wide, we are extremely disappointed that the Legislature did not support this needed expansion. Next year, however, we're hoping to see a realignment of priorities so that children, youth, and families throughout New York State can receive the services they desperately need beyond the regular school day. These services, provided by afterschool programming and funded by taxpayers across the entire state, are the foundation for student and community success."

Mairéad Hartmann, Program Officer, Rochester Area Community Foundation and Co-Chair, Greater Rochester After-School Alliance, said, "All children and youth deserve the opportunity to participate in safe, fun, supportive out-of-school-time programs that reinforce their school-day learning while contributing directly to their social skills and wellness. We are disappointed that New York State will not be investing additional dollars to support the creation of more high-quality after-school programs, as proposed in the Governor's Executive Budget. We implore our partners in state government to explore and understand the contribution of high-quality out-of-school-time programming in reducing the opportunity gap which plagues so many of our state's low-income children and youth. High quality out-of-

school-time programs that engage community partners in positive youth development have been proven to help bridge that gap. We look forward to continuing the conversation next year.”

Dr. Jim Bostic, Executive Director of the Nepperhan Community Center and Chair of the Hudson Valley Afterschool Network said, “We know that afterschool programming is a solid investment and important to the children, families, older adults, teachers and school leaders, public safety officers, and many others who benefit from all our children having the supports they need to thrive as independent, productive, and fulfilled members of our community. The Hudson Valley community is in need of additional support for afterschool programming that the state failed to provide in the final budget. I look forward to budget discussions next year and hope that the state will make more substantial investments in our youth.”

LeAnn W. Meinstereifel, Co-Chairperson of Expanded Learning Network of the Southern Tier and Program Director with Kids’ Adventure Club, Pathways Inc., said, “Expanded Learning Network of the Southern Tier knows that all youth in New York State deserve the opportunity to have access to quality out-of-school programming. As a result of the Legislature’s failure to allocate funds across the state, programs will continue to struggle with budgetary challenges that impact quality and accessibility. Communities are losing programs as a result of funding losses or are unable to start new qualified and needed services as monies are not available. Now is the time to continue the work with our legislative leaders to assure that future funding will benefit youth no matter where they live in the state of New York.”

Rebecca Reed, Lead of the North Country Afterschool Network and Executive Director of Youth Development, Watertown Family YMCA, said “Communities across New York State, including the North Country, are in need of afterschool programs to serve our youth and families by creating positive, enriching experiences after the school day ends. Governor Cuomo recognized these programs as a valuable resource when he proposed to significantly increase funding by \$160 million. Although the final budget did not reach this target, we hope that the budget next year will better address the needs of the state’s students.”

Pat Boyle, Member of the Nassau Coalition of Youth Service Agencies and Executive Director, Gateway Youth Outreach, said, “It is disappointing that the state failed to address the needs of children and families by expanding afterschool programs statewide in the final budget. While I am glad that funding afterschool programs has received some attention in the budget discussions this year, next year the legislators must take into consideration the vast need for programs that exists across the entire state. As we know in Long Island, an investment in afterschool programs is an investment in the future of our youth, our families, and our communities. The state can’t afford to keep missing opportunities for our youth to achieve and succeed.”

Lynn Siebert, Director of Education Services at the Capital District Child Care Council and member of Capital Region Expanded Learning Opportunities said, “Capital Region Extended Learning Opportunities is saddened that the final state budget fails to support the Governor’s proposal to significantly increase afterschool funding. Currently, the state has many fewer high-quality programs than are needed. As the Legislature begins to think about the budget for next year, we ask them to keep in mind the needs of the children and families that do not have a program available to them. The research is clear - children are more successful in school and life with the benefit of an afterschool program.”

NYSAN is a public-private partnership of organizations throughout the state dedicated to building a youth-serving system that increases the quality and availability of afterschool and expanded learning programs. Our vision is that all of New York State’s children and youth will have access to high-quality programs and services during the non-school hours that will support their success in school, college, work, and life.