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NYSAN Applauds Governor Andrew Cuomo's Commitment to Expanding Afterschool Programs

The New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) applauds Governor Andrew Cuomo's bold vision in calling for robust afterschool programs statewide. The research is clear that high-quality afterschool and summer programs not only keep children safe and parents working, but also help close the achievement gap for low-income students and support the development of critical thinking and social skills needed for long-term success in the workplace and in life.

"New York has a tremendous foundation of high-quality programs that can be quickly scaled up under the Governor's proposal to reach more than 100,000 students who currently have no access to afterschool experiences," said **NYSAN's Executive Director, Nora Niedzielski-Eichner**. "These new programs have the potential to change lives for children all across the state as they have the opportunity to explore new interests, develop healthy relationships, and receive academic support—all components of high-quality programs that have been shown to increase the chances that students will stay in school and out of trouble."

The Governor's proposal would initially almost triple the state's current investment in afterschool programs and promises to continue to grow support for these crucial programs over five years. New York has historically been a leader in afterschool programming, and, with the Governor's new proposal, the state looks poised to take another giant step forward. Meeting the needs of the 21st Century workforce is a crucial challenge for New York, and increasing access to afterschool programs is a cost-effective approach for families and for students.

"We know that expanding kids' high-quality learning time and opportunities is a great long-term investment in the health of our students and communities. We look forward to the opportunities Governor Cuomo's proposal could create for many thousands more students to access the kinds of strong afterschool programs for which New York is nationally known," said **Lucy Friedman, Co-Chair of NYSAN and President, The After-School Corporation**.

Afterschool and summer programs can serve as key partners for New York's schools, providing arts, physical activity, career exploration, hands-on science and technology, mentoring, tutoring, family engagement opportunities, and other supports that align with school district's ambitious goals for their students. **Tom Phillips, Superintendent of Watkins Glen Central School District** said, "The loss of funding for the 21st Century program last year was devastating to the more than 300 Watkins Glen students who participated in this critical afterschool program. At a time when schools are being funded at 2008-2009 State funding levels, schools cannot go it alone. Funding for afterschool programming is a lifeline for our most challenged students and families."

Afterschool and summer programs can also be a key partner in reducing juvenile crime, with the hours between 3 pm and 6 pm being the hours of highest risk for youth. **Timmy J. Currier, Chief of Police, Massena Police Department and Co-Chair, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids** said, "After school hours continue to be when our children are at the greatest risk. That's why here in Massena we are working toward the opening of a Boys & Girls Club. Preventing our kids from getting into trouble in the first place not only pays dividends by reducing the money we will need to spend in future years to rehabilitate our kids that get off track, it also enhances our kids educational, behavioral and social skills making our future more bright. This is a great step for New York to take." **Jenn O'Connor, New York State Director, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids** said, "The law enforcement leader members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids know that if we don't pay now, we will pay later. Therefore, we must invest in high-quality initiatives that help keep children out of trouble. We applaud the Governor on this historic investment in afterschool programs that proactively mentor children, such as Boys & Girls Clubs."

Leaders across the state recognize the tremendous potential for Governor Andrew Cuomo's proposal to benefit more than 100,000 New York students.

Kyle A. Stewart, Executive Director, Alliance of New York State YMCAs said, "The Alliance of New York State YMCAs thanks Governor Cuomo for his progressive initiative to expand after school programs across the Empire State. These effective after school programs provide educational, social and emotional benefits to kids in a safe and fun environment. Providing families in need with the expansion of these critical programs will undoubtedly lead to a bright future for New York's children."

Jennifer Leonard, President and CEO, Rochester Area Community Foundation said, "Every child should have the opportunity to participate in a high-quality, after-school program. The Governor's proposal to fully fund these critically important programs will help close the opportunity gap between urban and suburban children and create a more equitable community. Our Greater Rochester After-School Alliance and the New York State Afterschool Network partners will continue to engage every available resource in the pursuit of the best possible experience for our children and their families."

Michael Weiner, President and CEO, United Way of Buffalo & Erie County said, "The United Way of Buffalo & Erie County has been a strong supporter of afterschool programs in our community, and we are very excited by the potential of Governor Andrew Cuomo's proposal to substantially increase the number of students in the Greater Buffalo area who have access to safe, engaging, supportive programs after the school day ends."

Dr. Jim Bostic, Th.D., Chair of the Hudson Valley Afterschool Network and Executive Director, Nepperhan Community Center said, "Governor Andrew Cuomo's intention to add additional funding for after school programming is great news for the children of New York State. It clearly says that we now have a Governor that understands both the great value and tremendous need in making children a top funding priority in our state".

Salma Muro, Executive Director, BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) said, "Children - particularly children in poverty - need more time in a positive learning environment to succeed in school, graduate on time, and realize their true potential. The Governor's proposal to increase funding for after school will help us deliver that additional learning time so that children can achieve success and break out of the cycle of poverty."

Jessica Klos Shapiro, Public Policy and Communication Coordinator, The Early Care & Learning Council said, “The Early Care & Learning Council’s statewide network of child care resource and referral agencies is thrilled to see funding for afterschool programming that will nurture and foster growth in children. Supporting and increasing accessible, robust afterschool programs will build upon the academic foundation children will receive through universal pre-kindergarten programs and continue to engage students in learning and creative exploration throughout their youth.”

Kathy Clark, Director of Afterschool Programs, Hudson City School District said, “The Hudson City School District Afterschool Program appreciates Governor Cuomo for recognizing that afterschool programs fill a need for schools, families, communities, as well as our participants. With school district budgets stretched to their limits, funding designated specifically for afterschool programs will ease the burden for families and allow us to continue to offer quality programs in our schools and our communities.”

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.