

March 26, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
New York State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We are writing on behalf of the undersigned organizations that provide high-quality afterschool, summer, and expanded learning opportunities to New York's children and families. Thank you for your thoughtful leadership during this difficult time of crisis in New York State. As this crisis persists, it is crucial to strengthen the capacity of community-based organizations that provide expanded learning opportunities and other essential services for students and their families, especially as schools close and these services are disrupted. Even as afterschool programs are readily shifting their work to respond to COVID-19, many afterschool providers face an immediate financial crisis that demands firm and swift commitments from the State. Wherever possible, afterschool programs are working to ensure parents and students have meals, support, and resources they need to continue learning and keep their peace of mind. In other cases, programs have closed due to safety concerns and lack of resources. These programs must be able to pay their staff, including increases for extra hours and hazard pay, and ensure that programs are able to operate in full capacity. The staff at these programs deserve the stability of full pay during these trying times.

### **Emergency Priorities**

The afterschool field faces critical challenges amidst COVID-19:

1. Many afterschool programs face uncertainty about their programs due to school closures. Programs worry that lack of funding will lead to shortages of high-quality staff and the suspension of critical services that are essential to the students, families, and communities they serve. Some programs have already had to make the hard decision to lay off high-quality staff due to lack of commitment from state agencies to continue paying contracts.
2. Afterschool providers who have shifted their part-day work to full-day work to respond to the crucial need for childcare amid this crisis lack current safeguards to protect their staff's health and safety. Cleaning supplies are becoming more and more difficult to acquire. Staff are not provided PPEs but note that they are in close proximity with young children who lack skills such as covering their mouth when they cough or sneeze. These workers are at even greater risk due to serving children of essential workers who may be providing medical care for patients infected with COVID-19.

3. Afterschool providers fear that they will not be able to meet all deliverables of state-funded contracts due to school closures and social distancing measures to address the COVID-19 pandemic. State agencies have not provided guidance around this issue and how deliverables and/or payments will change.

To help afterschool programs navigate the impact of this crisis, New York State must:

1. **Allow afterschool programs with state-funded afterschool contracts, specifically Advantage After School Program, Empire State After-School Program, and Extended School Day, and federally-funded 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Programs to pay their staff with contracted funds during school and program closures.** Afterschool programs employ part-time staff members, many of whom are making close to minimum wage. During this crisis, the State must ensure these staff are provided for by allowing the programs to continue paying wages, regardless of whether or not they are able to operate. Providers cannot wait any longer as they make quick and dire decisions about their programs. New York City has already committed to paying out its contracts, and New York State must do the same and provide notification to providers this week.
2. Provide health and safety safeguards (including access to healthcare insurance for part-time staff) to protect staff who are providing child care for essential workers during COVID-19. Ensure programs have access to sanitizing supplies and PPEs to improve safety and staff comfort providing care in these programs.

Thank you for consideration of this request. We ask that clarification and guidance is made a priority in order to keep these crucial afterschool programs viable during this time of crisis for New York's children, families, and communities.

Sincerely,

Kelly Sturgis  
Executive Director  
**New York State Network for Youth Success**

Jackie Negri  
Director  
**NYS Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs**

Kyle Stewart  
Executive Director  
**Alliance of New York State YMCAs**

Jenn O'Connor  
Director of Policy and Advocacy  
**Prevent Child Abuse NY**

Naa-Shorme Aidoo  
Policy Director  
**Expanded Schools**

Jennifer Curry  
CEO  
**Change Impact**

Kimberly Luce  
Vice President of School-based Services  
**BestSelf Behavioral Health**

Sharon Greenberger  
President and CEO  
**YMCA of Greater New York**

June M. Muto  
Regional Network Lead  
**Wayne MOST - Maximizing Out of School Time**

Lena Bilik  
Policy Analyst  
**Children's Aid**

Kathleen Clark  
Consultant/Former Director  
**Hudson Bluehawk Nation Afterschool Program**

Brigit Hurley  
Director of Advocacy  
**The Children's Agenda**

Michelle Yanche  
Executive Director  
**Good Shepherd Services**

Patrick Boyle  
Executive Director  
**Gateway Youth Outreach Inc.**

Rachael Gazdick  
Chief Executive Officer  
**New York Edge**

Candace LaRue  
Founder  
**Candace LaRue and Associates**

cc: Kerri Neifeld  
Dan Fuller  
Adaobi Oguagha