



CHILD DEFENDER - NEW YORK

A Call to Action from the Children's Defense Fund - New York
January 20, 2006
LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND

HELP DEFEAT THE BUDGET CONFERENCE BILL!

The House of Representatives is scheduled to vote again on February 1st on the Budget Conference bill that makes deep cuts in health care, child support, child care, foster care and student loans. You can help stop these outrageous cuts and to defeat the bill. **Urge your Representative to Vote NO on the Budget Conference bill on February 1st.**

We know it seems like we have been talking about the budget bill forever. Your hard work last year helped to slow down the budget process and now we have one last chance to stop the bill. A procedural technicality sent the Budget Conference bill back to the House after the Senate voted on it and so, on February 1st, the House must vote on it again. This is the last chance to defeat the Budget Conference bill and to prevent deep cuts and harmful program changes to Medicaid, child support, child care, the TANF program, foster care and student loans.

More is known now about the harmful provisions in this bill than when the House passed it by only six votes on December 19th, just hours after the 774-page bill emerged from the Conference Committee. For example, we now know that the changes in Medicaid proposed in this bill will hurt many more children than the original House bill. The changes will reach even the poorest children who, earlier, were protected from some provisions. Another new provision added to the bill requires that all Medicaid applicants show a birth certificate or passport. This will likely prevent or delay many eligible children and families from getting the health care to which they are legally entitled. Work requirements in the TANF program were extended to many more families and could threaten assistance for some families in the future, especially two-parent families. Child care funding in the bill, although increased by \$1 billion and budgeted for more than \$11 billion, is still less than what the Congressional Budget Office says is needed to both meet the new work requirements and to keep pace with inflation.

CALL TO ACTION

Call your Representative during the week of January 23rd and ask 10 of your family members, friends or colleagues to call as well. Call toll free at 1-888-233-1221, and ask for your Representative's office. Tell the receptionist: "I am _____ calling from _____ to urge Representative _____ to Vote NO on the House Budget Conference bill that includes deep cuts and harmful program changes that will severely jeopardize the health care, foster care, child support payments, child care and student loans that children need. Ask my Representative to please make the right choice for children. Vote NO."

To check to see how your Representative voted on the Budget bill on December 19th, go to <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2005/roll670.xml>. Remember they must Vote NO on February 1st. Thank you. If you have questions, please call CDF-NY at 212-697-2323.

CHILDREN NOT A PRIORITY IN THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET ADDRESS

The budget proposed by Governor Pataki ignores the reality that the state of New York's children is not good and is only getting worse. Today more than 925,000, or more than 20 percent of the state's children, live in poverty with 480,000 living in extreme poverty – at less than half of the poverty level. This means that these families had to get by on less than \$7,412 a year, or \$20 a day.

In addition, New York has 469,000 children without health insurance, 80 percent of whom come from working families. Of the uninsured children, 70 percent are already eligible for public health insurance but are not enrolled. During 2004, the rate of New York households that were inadequately fed rose to 14.5 percent from 12.9 percent and the percentage of low-income households that have used a soup kitchen doubled to 39 percent. Additionally, in 2004, 634,658 children received food stamps with only 53 percent of all eligible for the program participating.

Donna Lawrence, the Executive Director of the Children's Defense Fund – New York says the Governor's priorities are misplaced: "Clearly, the state of New York's children is not good and calls for courageous leadership and comprehensive measures. The budget presented by the Governor this week, though long on tax cuts, is short on initiatives that will effectively begin to address the growing poverty and other conditions that are plaguing too many of New York's most vulnerable children. The horrific death of Nixzmary Brown underscores the need for New York to make preventive investments and provide supports for its most at-risk children *before* they suffer family breakdown, get sick, into trouble or become the victims of abuse and neglect." she said.

With the exception of a handful of small efforts, the Governor's budget did not provide for any new, bold, or expansive initiatives that will address the most serious problems faced by the state's most vulnerable children and families. If anything, some of the Governor's proposals may make matters worse. For example, the Governor's proposal to sanction children for the actions of their parents who are public assistance recipients unfairly penalizes children and will contribute to New York's rising rate of child poverty. Similarly, the Governor's proposal to increase funding for the Flexible Fund for Family Services, while promising county flexibility, eliminates the funding guarantees for child care and other supports for New York's most at-risk families.

The Children's Defense Fund – New York urges state legislators to put children and their families front and center when reviewing the Governor's \$110.7 billion dollar budget proposal and deciding how to allocate the \$2 billion surplus.

"Now is the time to enhance our public health insurance programs and their enrollment and retention procedures to assure that every eligible child in New York has health insurance coverage and is able to see a doctor when sick. Now is the time to expand supports for working families, like childcare, food stamps, child nutrition programs and the Earned Income Tax Credit that help working families and their children meet their basic needs, and transition out of poverty. Now is the time to examine our child welfare and foster care systems, and provide the resources necessary to guarantee that there will be no more tragedies like that of Nixzmary Brown," continued Donna Lawrence.

FIVE STUDENTS WHO *BEAT THE ODDS* HONORED AT CDF BENEFIT

The Beat the Odds® program was initiated by CDF in 1990 and celebrates the positive potential of young people by providing financial help, public recognition and networking opportunities to young people who have overcome enormous challenges such as poverty, violence, homelessness and substance abuse to achieve academic success and serve their community. The 2006 award winners were Timothy Donnell Anderson, Judith Rosena, Abu Bakarr Sesay, Ramell Stone and Teresa Xu,

Their strength and determination have propelled them to truly beat the odds.

CDF, during the benefit, also honored attorney and avid CDF-NY supporter Susan P. Thomases for her dedication to improving the lives of New York City's children. Marian Wright Edelman, CDF's Founder and President, joined Keynote Speaker, NY Senator Hillary Clinton, together with BTO Award Presenters Marlo Thomas and Harry Belafonte, in honoring the five students and Ms. Thomases.

Meet our 2006 Beat The Odds Winners:

Timothy Donnell Anderson was born into a broken family and forced to confront the effects of substance abuse, abandonment and suicide in his family. In June, he will be the first person in his family to graduate from high school.

Judith Rosena has survived a life of domestic violence, and remains "determined not to let these bad experiences hold [her] back."

Abu Bakarr Sesay has survived a broken family, poverty, homelessness, countless relocations and a civil war in Sierra Leone, Africa. Robert Diamond, Senior Social Worker at DeWitt Clinton says, "Abu is an example for us all of a person who was victimized, but refused to define himself as a victim."

Ramell Stone turned to drugs to escape troubles at home and at school, and was eventually arrested and mandated to a treatment program. Ramell, who is now about to graduate from high school, says, "Despite all the hardships I have been through I'm still standing; I'm stronger than ever; I know the possibilities are endless."

Teresa Xu was raised in China by her paternal grandparents until she was 13 when she was sent to the United States to live with her mother where she suffered from abuse and was eventually removed by Child Protective Services. She now attends John Bowne High School, holds two jobs and volunteers in her community.

For full bios on the Beat the Odds Winners, please visit our website at www.cdfny.org.

SAVE THE DATE

Participate in the Youth in the Movement Rally

When: Thursday, February 2, 2006

Where: 1199/SEIU at 310 West 43rd Street between 8th and 9th Avenues

What: CDF-NY's Youth in the Movement will be hosting a youth rally and we need YOUR youth organization's talent to make it a winning event! The central theme of the rally will be "Speak Truth to Power & Justice." Youth programs can showcase their talent via performance, spoken-word or any other creative fashion. Please contact Sandra Trujillo at 212-697-2323 x 118 or strujillo@cdfny.org.