

HEALTH

End Lead Poisoning in New York

New York has more children with elevated blood lead levels than any other state. Lead exposure rates in some parts of New York are 5 to 6 times higher than in Flint, Michigan at the height of its lead crisis, with poor children and children of color disproportionately impacted. To reduce lead exposure, New York should *enact A3432/S5107*, with amendments, to establish minimum maintenance standards for lead hazards in housing, adopt a state Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) rule, and provide funding to find and fix lead hazards before they harm children. The State should also direct the Department of Health to *submit a Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) state plan amendment (SPA) to establish a Health Service Initiative (HSI)* leveraging \$25 million in existing lead poisoning prevention program funds to draw down \$50 million in federal matching funds, making \$75 million available. Finally, the State should *provide an additional \$34.5 million for counties to implement the new blood lead action level*. Last year's lowering of the blood lead action level from 10 micrograms per deciliter (µg/dL) to 5 µg/dL resulted in a five-fold increase in the volume of lead poisoning cases at local health departments and the resulting need for funding to provide adequate services.

Expand Immigrant Health Coverage

Over 400,000 New Yorkers cannot obtain health coverage due to their immigration status. Without coverage, individuals forego the care they need, jeopardizing their health and their abilities to work and care for their families. By allocating \$532M to create a state-funded Essential Plan, the State can provide coverage to New Yorkers whose immigration status excludes them from coverage.

Increase Funds for Enrollment Assistance and Outreach

Over 100,000 children in New York are currently uninsured. While most are eligible for coverage, families are often unaware of free or affordable coverage options. Local navigators, who can provide in-person assistance to families seeking health coverage and clarify often-complicated enrollment procedures, have helped over 300,000 New Yorkers enroll in coverage since 2013. However, New York's navigators have never received a cost-of-living increase. The State should increase the navigator budget from \$27.2M to \$32M to guarantee high quality enrollment services. Funding for outreach in our hardest-to reach communities is also needed. The State should provide \$2M for community-based organizations to educate consumers, particularly in immigrant communities, where people live in fear and uncertainty because of federal threats like public charge.

Pass the New York Health Act

Too many New York families still lack affordable, comprehensive health coverage. Coverage options remain fragmented and confusing, creating barriers for consumers. The time has come for universal coverage in the form of the New York Health Act.

Restore Funding for School-Based Health Centers

\$5M in permanent funding is needed to restore FY2018-19 budget cuts to school-based health centers (SBHCs), which provide critical services to students in medically underserved communities across the state, improving educational outcomes for those who would otherwise miss school or forego care.

Secure Sustainable Funding for Early Intervention Services

Children with developmental delays and disabilities continue to experience difficulty accessing vital services that could help them catch up or prevent their delays from worsening. Ever since drastic cuts were made in 2011, high-quality early intervention (EI) providers have been forced to close or stop taking EI clients, thereby limiting children's access to these services. To address these long-standing issues, the State should increase rates by 10% and ensure insurance companies pay their fair share to cover the cost of EI services.

YOUTH JUSTICE

End the Adult Incarceration of Youth Under Raise the Age

Young people who are sentenced to a term of incarceration require developmentally-appropriate settings and supports. But, under Raise the Age, adolescents sentenced to a state prison term are sent to Adolescent Offender Facilities, which are operated by the adult Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. The Office of Children and Family Services has administered secure facilities for similarly youth and has a track record of delivering age-appropriate services. We support legislation in the Governor's Proposed Budget that would transfer all 16 and 17 year olds to juvenile facilities operated by OCFS by October 2020.

End All Forms of Solitary Confinement for Teenagers in Raise the Age Facilities

Experts in mental health and corrections have rejected isolation, solitary confinement and lengthy periods of in-cell segregation as a response to adolescent behavior in facilities. Despite this, current practice in Raise the Age Adolescent Offender facilities for sentenced youth permits children to be held in isolation for up to 18-22 hours a day. Because brain development is underway, adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of solitary confinement, including increased risk for aggravated mental illness, self-mutilation, and suicidal thoughts. We must end this practice in facilities for teenagers.

End the Arrest and Prosecution of Children Under 12

Under current law, children as young as 7 years old may be arrested and prosecuted as juvenile delinquents in Family Court. Children under 12 may be subject to police questioning, pre-trial detention with older youth, probation, and mandatory confinement. Children of color are disproportionately represented among young children charged in court statewide. By raising the age from age 7 to 12 we can better serve elementary age children who come to the attention of law enforcement through our existing system of community-based services.

Expand Youthful Offender Protections Up to Age 25

Based on research in neuroscience and psychology, we know that human brain development continues into the mid-20s. Young adults are more impulsive and more susceptible to peer pressure than adults. New York's Youthful Offender ("YO") law provides the opportunity for youth under the age of 19 to have a criminal conviction set aside and replaced with a confidential, non-criminal adjudication. It also allows for reduced prison sentences. Yet, at age 19, this critical protection is no longer available and young people face mandatory prison sentences and lifelong criminal records that create barriers to education, jobs, and housing for youthful mistakes. New York should strengthen existing protections and create a new "Young Adult" status for youth up to age 25.

CHILD WELFARE

Restore State Support for Preventive Services at 65%

The federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) will allow states to seek federal reimbursement for evidence-based preventive services. We urge New York to adopt this provision of the new federal law to help fund existing services, and to expand access to evidence-based preventive programs across the state. New York State reimbursement for preventive and protective services, which is set at 65% in statute, has been reduced to 62% through the state budget each year since 2008. The state should restore reimbursement to 65% and to designate the restored funds to support counties in implementing evidence-based services.

Remove KinGap from the Foster Care Block Grant

The Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) is under-utilized across the state. To expand the program and support permanency for children, we must remove KinGAP from the Foster Care Block Grant. Because counties must prioritize their Block Grant funds for foster care, funding KinGAP from these limited dollars can create a disincentive for counties to support families with KinGAP. To remedy this, the State should make KinGAP subsidies an independent funding stream, like adoption subsidies.

Data Reporting Bill to Improve Access to Data on Child Welfare Preventive Services

New York is a national leader in investing in a range of services to prevent child abuse and neglect. New York's investment in preventive services has helped lead to a dramatic reduction in the number of children in foster care over the last several decades. There is little publicly available data on statewide preventive services. To increase access to data, we recommend the state amend Social Services Law Section 409a on Collection and Reporting of Data on Child Welfare Prevention Services to require annual reporting related to NYS Child Welfare Systems including prevention services for increased oversight and accountability.

Reforming the Child Welfare State Central Register

Last session, the legislature passed legislation that would have brought New York in line with a majority of jurisdictions that require the government to find that it is at least more likely than not that maltreatment occurred, before a parent is found to have done something wrong. This legislation was vetoed by the Governor. New York currently has the lowest possible standard to put a parent on the registry for alleged child maltreatment. Parents are listed on the Register for up to ten years after their youngest child turns 18 – which could be as many as 28 years. We support renewing this legislation to raise the standard, as well as requiring automatically sealing indicated reports of neglect after 5 years to shield them from employers, while ensuring that all reports continue to be available to child welfare and foster care agencies who must ensure child safety.

POVERTY

Use the State Tax Code to Reduce Child Poverty

Over 740,000 children in New York live in poverty, with children of color disproportionately impacted. This year, New York has an opportunity to lead the nation in eliminating child poverty. To do so, New York should: (1) Expand and strengthen the Empire State Child Tax Credit by establishing a new early childhood tax credit of up to \$1,000 per child for children ages 0-3, eliminating the credit's phase-in, and expanding the existing credit up to \$500 for children ages 4-17; (2) Increase and expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) by raising the state's match from 30% to 45% of the federal program and extending EITC to childless workers under age 25; (3) Allow tax credits to be paid to families quarterly; and (4) Make EITC available to more immigrant New Yorkers by adjusting filing requirements to mimic those of the Empire State Child Tax Credit.