



New York State Community Action 2015 Public Policy Agenda

The New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA) is a statewide membership, professional development and advocacy organization serving New York's Community Action Agencies and CSBG-funded non-profits. Community Action Agencies are federally designated as the frontline resource for people living in poverty, providing direct services and support for education, employment and family support services for low income families. In addition to the direct services they provide, CAA's are leaders in promoting community economic development through community partnerships and inter-agency collaborations and through this process 461,277 New Yorkers were served by CAA's in FFY 2013.

The policy priorities identified here share a common goal, facilitating the efforts of low income people to find and maintain employment and to build assets for independence.

1. Resources to Support Quality Child Care for Low Income and Working Families

The New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA) urges the state to increase funding for child care subsidies for low income working families. NYSCAA supports the Winning Beginning NY's budget request for an initial investment of \$100 million which would assist at least 13,000 new child care slots for working families.

Many young children in New York have no parent at home during the day. High quality child care, however, is difficult to find and expensive. And those children who could benefit the most from high quality child care are from families who are least able to afford and access it. The implications of the absence of this care are far-reaching and long lasting. Children who attend high-quality early childhood programs are healthier and perform better in school. They're less likely to smoke, abuse alcohol and illegal drugs, engage in risk-taking behavior, and be arrested and incarcerated. As adults, they are more likely to own their own homes. Parents and employers also benefit as parents whose children are in safe high quality child care are more productive employees.

Bill: A.1978 Titus Limits co-payments for child care subsidies based upon the family's ability to pay; co-payments shall not exceed ten percent of any given family's household income.

The New York State Community Action Association supports the New York State Afterschool Network in proposing \$178.5 million in afterschool funds be included in the FY2015-16 budget.





The FY2014-15 state budget included \$57 million in afterschool funding. New York's funding for three major afterschool funding streams remains 40% below pre-recession levels, which leaves 1.1 million students who want to attend an afterschool program with no place to go. Afterschool programs serve urban, suburban, and rural communities. Children and families in every community deserve and need a safe, educational place to go after the school day ends.

2. Universal Prekindergarten

As providers of Head Start programs and advocates for increasing school readiness of young children, Community Action Agencies and the New York State Community Action Association support Winning Beginning NY in request for an additional \$150 million for upfront funding for Statewide Universal high-quality full-day Pre-K.

Head Start is a federal program that promotes the school readiness of children ages birth to five from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development. Governor Cuomo has called for \$1.5 billion in state spending over five years to provide pre-K across the state in any community that wants it.

Since its inception in 1964, Head Start has provided millions of preschool children from low-income families with a comprehensive preschool education program designed to meet their educational, health, social, emotional, nutritional, and psychological needs. In addition, the program recognizes that parents are the most important influence on a child's development. Community Action Agencies have been there from the beginning, administering Head Start programs and working in the communities that need it.

Head start has proven to be effective in ensuring the success of youth in school. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services conducted a study in 2005 and found that, as measured by the ECERS-R scores, Head Start centers were rated as having higher level of classroom quality than other center-based Pre-K classrooms, state-funded Pre-K classrooms and private Pre-K classrooms.

3. Support for the Development of Affordable Housing and Support Services

As advocates for low income people and providers of housing, case management and support services, the New York State Community Action Association and member agencies urge New York State to increase the availability of safe, affordable housing in urban and rural communities and to provide resources to expand the availability of supported housing for low income people.

CAA's in New York encourage the Governor to increase funding for rural resource programs such as RESTORE, Rural Area Revitalization Program, AHC, ACCESS to HOME and small project set-asides. Community Action Agencies also urge the State to ensure that supported housing and case management services are provided to people who need such services to maintain their housing.





NYS Supportive Housing Program (NYSSHP)

The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance's (OTDA) NYS Supportive Housing Program (NYSSHP) is one of the State's most important funding sources for innovative and effective solutions that actually keep people from becoming or remaining homeless. It is the primary funding stream for the ongoing operation of supportive housing in New York State – it pays for critical on-site services that make it possible to house multi-disabled and vulnerable individuals, families and children in permanent affordable apartments.

NYSSHP funds the housing-based support services for over 18,000 formerly homeless and at-risk single adults, families with children and youth throughout NYS. This funding ensures that supportive housing residences built by the three celebrated New York/New York Agreements have adequate front desk staff; it ensures that residences upstate have case managers for all the tenants; it provides critical matching funds that draw down millions of dollars in federal funding.

This past year, the SFY 2012-13 budget funded NYSSHP at \$26 million; approximately \$20 million from the general fund and \$6 million from the Medicaid Redesign Team's Supportive Housing Program. Of course this is premature, as we have not seen the Executive's budget for the upcoming year, but if there is no increase from last year's funding level, it will be \$2.46 million short of what is needed to fund all existing programs and pipeline programs opening up in SFY 2013-14. This means that 30 programs will not receive funding putting at risk approximately 1200 homeless single adults, families and youth across the state.

Services to End Homelessness Program (STEHP)

Another best practice in the homelessness field is rapid rehousing. OTDA deserves praise for revamping its prevention services funding to incorporate this practice, allowing for homeless individuals who do not need supportive housing to get one shot, short or medium term help to make their homeless episode as brief as possible.

Last year the legislature increased funding to the homeless bucket by \$1 million, which helped offset a \$1.3 million federal cut that partially funds STEHP. A new RFP was recently awarded, and because of the great demand for this program, all fundable programs received approximately 75% of their request. The Network strongly recommends that STEHP be increased by upwards of \$5 million to augment those shortfalls in the next budget and has great confidence that OTDA will continue to do a great job at targeting the funds where most needed.

A Call for a New York State Supportive Housing Plan

The Network supports the creation of a new New York/New York Agreement. New York/New York III, which will create 9,000 units of supportive housing in New York City, ends next year. The governor has indicated his support for a new agreement and expanding it statewide. As we are now in the ninth year of the NY/NY III agreement, there is urgent need to achieve a new agreement soon to prevent the supportive housing pipeline from drying up.

The New York/New York agreements have successfully spurred consistent supportive housing development in New York City. The first agreement also demonstrated that supportive housing is cost effective by saving the state and local





government money spent on higher cost emergency care, hospitalizations and incarcerations. Those results have been replicated over 40 times across the nation since the first NY/NY based study.

The Governor has indicated that he supports an expansion of the program, both in New York City and also, for the first time, to the rest of New York State. The Network strongly supports the creation new and scatter-site units for a total of 40,000 state-wide.

Bill: A01131A

Enacts the "public housing and safety security act"; grants the Division of Housing and Community Renewal the authority to issue grants to public housing authorities or agencies for use in improving security in public housing projects; provides eligible activities for such grants; and requires periodic safety inspection and an annual report.

Bill: S.01702

Relates to veterans' eligibility for public housing; expands eligibility requirements to include veterans of the recent conflicts; requires granting of a preference for public housing to veterans or families of veterans who have a military service connected disability.

4. Support for instituting a Family Leave Insurance initiative

The New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA) supports the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC) in calling for the implementation of a statewide Family Leave Insurance Program (FLI).

In New York State, the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) requires most large employers to provide their workers with 12 weeks of unpaid leave for bonding with a new child, and care of their own or family member's serious illness. Although the Temporary Disability Insurance Program, which provides partial wage replacement is an important resource, it does not cover bonding with a new child or caring for a relative.

We support the IDC in proposing a Family Leave Insurance program in New York State to provide short-term wage replacement to enable workers to survive financially when they need to care for a new child or seriously ill family member. This is crucial for the individuals and families that Community Action Agencies serve.

Bill: S.4742-B

Establishes family care leave benefits within the disability provisions of the workers' compensation law; such benefits provide up to six weeks of paid leave from work for the care of a family member with a serious health condition or to bond with the employee's child within the first 12 months of birth or taking custody of such child.





5. Support additional funding for Minority and Women Business Enterprises (MWBEs) to ensure a consistent and streamlined process

The New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA) urges the state to increase funding for Minority and Women Business Enterprises (MWBEs) to provide a consistent and streamlined approach for certification.

NYSCAA fully supports Governor Cuomo and the Division of Minority and Women's Business Development in their efforts to promote economic opportunities for MWBEs. While these efforts have been successful in reducing barriers to and expanding participation by MWBEs in state contracting, the current certification process is extremely cumbersome, discouraging many women and minority-owned businesses from seeking certification.

Community Action Agencies have found it difficult to find certified MWBE's, largely because of the cumbersome process. The New York State Community Action Association encourages the State to streamline the certification process and to provide funding to assist businesses to complete the certification process.

6. Support for increasing the minimum wage and index it to inflation

The New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA) supports the Governor's proposal to increase the minimum wage; however we ask that be increased higher and it index to inflation.

NYSCAA applauds Governor Cuomo in acknowledging the need to increase the minimum wage as a way to address the severe income inequality and poverty levels in New York State. But the Governor's proposals of \$10.50 statewide and \$11.50 for New York City are seriously inadequate for New York State and New York City with their high costs of living.

When low-paid workers struggle to purchase necessities on inadequate wages as the cost of living rises, it undermines our economy. Raising the minimum wage will put more money in the pockets of workers who most need to spend those dollars. It will boost consumer spending at local businesses across the state. Cities like Seattle, San Francisco, Oakland, and Los Angeles are all on the path to raising their minimum wage to between \$13 and \$15 per hour by 2017. Any wage increases should be indexed to inflation. In addition, localities should have the ability to set their own wages going forward.

For more information about Community Action in New York, contact the New York State Community Action Association at 518-690-0491, or visit us on the web at www.nyscommunityaction.org

