



January 9, 2008

Honorable Eliot Spitzer
Governor of New York
Executive Chamber
Albany, N.Y. 12224

Dear Governor Spitzer:

On behalf of our Board of Trustees, our staff, and all of the children and families we serve, I am writing to let you know that The Children's Aid Society strongly supports the new children's health initiatives that you have proposed in your State of the State address. Access to affordable, high quality health care for all children in New York State is an important, laudable, and reasonable goal.

Children's Aid is on the front lines of serving New York City's most disadvantaged children and families every day. You saw a sampling of our programs at the Dunlevy Milbank Center in March, so you know our services span the course of children's development from infancy through young adulthood, and include adoption and foster care, medical and dental care, mental health counseling, juvenile justice and preventive services, early childhood programs and Community School programs. Children's Aid carries out this work in 45 sites in Manhattan, the Bronx, and in Brooklyn and Staten Island, serving over 150,000 children each year.

Every day, we encounter the impact of poverty and its deleterious effect on the healthy development of children. Through our school- and community-based health centers, we have developed programs to address the increasing epidemics of childhood obesity, Type II diabetes, chronic asthma, and the traumatic emotional and mental health problems that affect children's ability to succeed in school. We support the full enactment of the Healthy Schools Act that you propose -- to improve the food that is served in public school cafeterias and its nutritional and dietary standards, as well as school wellness policies that will increase children's daily physical activities and exercise. Sustainable and adequate funding for the expansion of school-based health and mental health clinics is also needed. Your proposed Medicaid reimbursement reform, emphasizing funding of primary and preventive care, can help fulfill this unmet need.

Your plan to fund the expansion of Child Health Plus, which will assure that the 400,000 uninsured children in New York State will now be eligible for health insurance coverage is a vision we fully support. Your proposal to expand coverage for children of low-income families from 200% to 400% of the Federal poverty level will assist the children and families in our state that are slightly above the current eligibility thresholds. Few states have had a health care enrollment program that has been as successful as New York's -- enrolling 88% percent of eligible children below 200% of the poverty level.

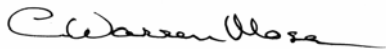
Last summer, with new federal regulations issued overnight – without even a public comment period – mandating that our state could only expand health insurance enrollment if we had already enrolled 95% of eligible children below 200% of the poverty level, is an example of a total policy fiasco at the federal level.

With your leadership as a guiding force, we are prepared to help New York State reach many more of the families and children who now have no health insurance and no access to primary health care. Our Health Care Access Program (HCAP) was created to help children and families overcome logistical and language barriers, and to successfully enroll into New York's three principal government-sponsored health insurance programs: Medicaid, Child Health Plus (CHP) and Family Health Plus.

The Children's Aid Society, along with our partners, continues to enroll low-income families through a contract with the New York State Department of Health for facilitated enrollment services. Over the past nine years, we have successfully administered our HCAP program, serving children and families in communities of need, while reaching diverse populations such as Latinos, African-Americans, Caribbean-Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Asian Americans. Since the program's inception in 2000, we have expanded and formed a coalition, serving as the lead agency, with three subcontractors who serve the Asian community on the Lower East Side of New York City. During this time, we have helped over 57,500 individuals enroll. On average, HCAP serves 8,000 individuals annually by facilitating enrollment into public health insurance programs.

Thank you for taking a strong stand on the issues that will become the cornerstones of a coherent public health policy for our state. We must address the health and well-being of our children today, so we can be assured of the promise that they hold for us tomorrow.

Sincerely,



C. Warren Moses
Chief Executive Officer