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THE SENATE
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January 16, 2015

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Re: Restoration of Funding for Runaway and Homeless Youth

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As you finalize your decisions regarding budget priorities for FY 2015-2016, I respectfully urge you to allocate \$4.75 million for Runaway and Homeless Youth in the Executive Budget to create new beds to address the 5,041 annual instances when children are turned away from shelters because of overcrowding.

There is an urgent need for an increase in funding for two primary reasons. First, the budget allocation Funding for Runaway and Homeless Youth has been slashed by more than half in just five years. In 2014, the allocation was frozen at \$2.35 million for the fourth year in a row. This amount represents a 66% decrease from the peak-year funding of \$6.3 million in FY 2008-2009 in inflation-adjusted dollars.

Second, while funding for Runaway and Homeless Youth has plummeted, the needs of this extremely vulnerable population have dramatically risen during recent difficult economic times. In 2008, according to the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, shelters documented 573 instances where kids were turned away from shelters because there were no available beds. By 2012 (the most recent year data is available), this number skyrocketed to 5,041 instances – a nearly tenfold increase. In the past 90 days alone, shelter providers across New York State have been forced to refuse entry to nearly 400 children because of the lack of beds.

As I'm sure you're aware, young people who are turned away from shelters are forced to live on the streets, where they are significantly more likely to resort to drastic



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measures to secure a place to sleep. A 2013 study by Covenant House found that nearly a quarter of homeless kids were at high risk of being targeted victims of sexual assault and trafficked for sex crimes. This deplorable situation also leads to significant health problems for these children, including sexually transmitted diseases, HIV infection, drug addiction, depression and suicide.

Help for our state's homeless youth represents a moral imperative to protect innocent children from the evils and exploitation of life on the street. It's also prudent public policy to provide these kids with stable housing so they may grow into responsible, healthy adults and make a positive impact on our communities.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to engage with you and your staff in order to develop a budget strategy to address the needs of our Homeless and Runaway Youth. If you have any questions, please contact me at 212-633-8052.

Thank you for your continued leadership for the people of the State of New York.

Sincerely,



Brad Hoylman

State Senator

27th District - Manhattan