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August 2, 2021

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

Re: At-Risk Youth Emergency Funding

Dear Governor Cuomo:

In your recent announcement regarding your plans to address the rise in violent crime, you committed the State to investing at least \$76 million to create jobs and community activities for at-risk youth. As you may know, the City of Poughkeepsie and Dutchess County have recently committed to developing a Youth Opportunity Center that would line up perfectly with the intended use of this funding. Respectfully, we ask that you allocate a portion of that funding directly to this project that promises to have a major impact on the youth in the City of Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County, and across the Hudson Valley.

The proposed Youth Opportunity Center, which would be located at the former Poughkeepsie YMCA, would not only offer recreational opportunities for Dutchess County youths, but would also offer violence prevention, mediation, support group and summer enrichment services. Additionally, the center would offer 24-hour childcare—an issue that has been at the forefront as many parents seek to return to work but struggle to find high quality, affordable options for childcare. Not only would this help prevent youth violence, it would provide enrichment opportunities to help young people succeed throughout their lives by ensuring they have access to the services they need to thrive.

According to the Youth Center proposal, a coalition of community partners and diverse stakeholders would run the center's operations. These stakeholders would include Dutchess County, the City of Poughkeepsie, several local colleges and the local library district, the YMCA of Kingston and Ulster County, Nuvance Health, Mass Design Group, Day One, Community Matters 2, and Poughkeepsie Farm Project, with potential for others to join in the future, including others working in conjunction such as the Poughkeepsie School District, Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet, Family Services, Inc., Scenic Hudson, and the Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam.

As you know, early intervention is a major key to future success, and there are a multitude of issues that are at the heart of the surge in violence our State is facing. Given the extent and nature of this problem, it is critical that we take a comprehensive approach to addressing it, and the development of this Youth Center is certain to play a key role in that approach.

This once in a generation opportunity to reach area youth has tremendous community support behind it and will likely serve as a model for communities across the state. As it stands, the coalition currently has secured about half of the funding necessary for the project, which is estimated to cost approximately \$50 million in total. Respectfully, we ask that the State contributes at least \$5 million of the \$76 million dedicated to creating jobs and community activities for at-risk youth to this worthy project.

As always, I encourage you to work in partnership with the State Legislature on this issue, and we stand ready to be of assistance in any manner that we can. We thank you for your time and consideration of this urgent request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sue Serino".

Senator Sue Serino
41st District