



July 20, 2020

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

Dear Governor Cuomo—

Thank you and your administration for your leadership during the COVID-19 Pandemic. We write to you today regarding the proposed \$2.45 million cut for the Settlement House Program (SHP). This funding stream, which was approved during the FY 20-21 budget, provides funding for 48 settlement houses across the state and is critical to our communities who rely heavily on the services that settlement houses provide. **We respectfully request that your administration not only avoid cuts to this program but also work with us to increase funding for SHP to support these essential organizations as they provide crisis services during the pandemic.**

For decades, settlement houses have been foundations of support for neighborhoods across New York State, with some having served their communities for over 100 years. Residents rely on these programs for a wide array of crucial services including employment programs, food pantry programs, children's and afterschool programs, language and literacy education, legal counseling, arts programming, senior services, and health and home care.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, settlement houses have shifted their programming to adjust to the new facts on the ground. These programs have taken the lead on distributing life-saving Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including sanitizer and masks and have changed their senior center operations into virtual assets, providing online classes and telephone check ins for their most vulnerable clients. They have continued to provide case management services and have expanded the distribution of home delivered meal ("meals on wheels") programs to meet the significant increase in demand for New York's seniors.

Already, COVID-19 has ravaged our settlement houses with several staffers having passed away while working on the frontlines of this pandemic. Over 270 staff members have been laid off or furloughed so far, with over 890 staff members projected to follow suit by August.

The proposed \$2.45 million cut, if it takes effect, will cause these programs to be unable to fill the over 1,280 seasonal positions that will be crucial to provide services in the months ahead, essentially destroying their ability to continue to function.

The settlement house program has always been central to the stability and success of our underserved communities and it is clear that they are a critical asset necessary for our recovery efforts from COVID-19. The proposed cuts to these programs is flawed public policy that will result in many members of the community being forced to rely on more expensive services to survive. It will also expose more New Yorkers to homelessness, which puts them in greater danger because homeless New Yorkers in congregate care settings are 56% more likely to die from COVID-19 related illness than other New York City residents.

We therefore respectfully urge you to avoid the proposed cuts to the Settlement House Program and instead infuse additional funds to shore up these communities that have been disproportionately hurt by the pandemic.

We look forward to working with you to protect the Settlement House Program and those New Yorkers it serves. Thank you again for your critical work during this crisis.

Sincerely,

Yuh-Line Niou,
Assemblymember, 65th AD

Carmen Arroyo,
Assemblymember, 85th AD

Charles Barron,
Assemblymember, 60th AD

Robert Carroll,
Assemblymember, 44th AD

Anthony D'Urso,
Assemblymember, 16th AD

Inez Dickens,
Assemblymember, 70th AD

Harvey Epstein,
Assemblymember, 74th AD

Deborah Glick,
Assemblymember, 66th AD

Ellen Jaffee,
Assemblymember, 97th AD

Ron Kim,
Assemblymember, 40th AD

William Magnarelli,
Assemblymember, 129th AD

Danny O'Donnell,
Assemblymember, 69th AD

Dan Quart,
Assemblymember, 73rd AD

Rebecca Seawright,
Assemblymember, 76th AD

Andrew Hevesi
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Brian Barnwell,
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Assemblymember, 103rd AD

Catalina Cruz,
Assemblymember, 39th AD

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Assemblymember, 51st AD

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Jo Anne Simon,
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