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Statement of Susan Stamler Executive Director of United Neighborhood Houses On Governor Cuomo's FY 2019 Executive Budget Proposal

Over the last year much has been made of Governor Cuomo's forceful rhetoric in support of New Yorkers in the wake of destructive federal budgetary and policy decisions. And while the Governor deserves credit for articulating the values of diversity and inclusivity that New York stands for, we are disappointed that his FY2019 Executive Budget does not go far enough in equipping the nonprofit human services sector to support the very New Yorkers at risk under this federal administration.

To be sure, there are a number of positive developments in the Governor's budget proposal, including a funding restoration in child care, a net expansion in after school, and support for youth employment. Yet in all of these areas demand far outpaces the Governor's spending plan and additional resources are needed to support New York's working families. Further, these investments are tempered by cuts in a number of areas and inaction in others, including:

Adult Literacy Education — For the second year in a row, the Governor's budget proposes cutting \$1 million in State funding out of a budget of just over \$7 million for English language classes. At a time when immigrants are being subjected to intense scrutiny, abuse, and deportation, it is not enough to offer legal support and words of support. Without English proficiency, immigrants can become linguistically isolated and subject to misinformation and exploitation. Further, a lack of English proficiency also keeps immigrants locked into low-wage jobs, hurting not only their families, but also depressing the competitiveness of the State labor force. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are an absolute prerequisite to success in our society, and it makes no sense to rob immigrant communities of this lifeline to self-empowerment. UNH calls on the Governor to correct this injustice in his amended budget, and in fact increase the state's investment to \$15.3m to offset federal rules that are slated to make it more difficult for undocumented New Yorkers to access federally funded English classes.

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities – Following a year in which the legislature worked with the Governor to update and strengthen the Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) model to better serve the State's older adults, we are very disappointed that the Governor has now proposed slashing funding by a third from \$6 million to \$4 million. As New Yorkers continue to live longer, it is essential that the State invest in the NORC model not

only to allow these individuals to age with dignity in their homes, but also to contain costs in the health care system, where many older adults will wind up with acute issues that could have been prevented through proactive services. UNH calls on the Governor to restore this funding in his budget amendments and work the State Office for the Aging to create a plan for NORC support and expansion into the future.

Nonprofit Stability – The nonprofit human services sector is an essential partner to the State in delivering high-quality programs to millions of children, youth, immigrants, older adults, and New Yorkers of all backgrounds every year. Yet the Governor’s budget proposal once again fails to adequately account for the cost of the services it wants delivered. Too often the nonprofit sector is expected to do more with less, and the employees of these nonprofits — most often women of color — bear the brunt of this burden in the form of low wages. As part of the Strong Nonprofits for a Better New York coalition, UNH called on the Governor to fully fund contract costs associated with the increasing minimum wage, invest in the decaying infrastructure of child care centers, senior centers, and other community spaces, and implement long-forgone cost of living adjustments needed to support increased payroll, space, utility and other costs. We are deeply disappointed that the Governor has chosen to not address any of these concerns and call on him to make these investments in his amended budget.

It is clear that the year ahead will be a challenging one for New York. Yet it is essential that the Governor not lose sight that at the end of the day, the children, youth, immigrants, older adults and all other New Yorkers supported by the human services sector need him to back his rhetoric with real investments that safeguard their health, safety, and opportunity.

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