

**Testimony to the New York State Division of the Budget:
Achieving Balance through Prioritization
Regina Little, Parent and Advocate
November 29, 2007**

Good afternoon. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify. My name is Regina Little and I am the mother of two boys who attend school in the Bronx – one is in elementary school at CS 61 and the other is in middle school at IS 190. I'm here today to talk with you about what it means to be a parent in a school with an after-school program at a community school and to ask that the state invest more money in after-school programs.

Why has it been so important that my children go to a community school with a strong after-school program? The principals at both of my children's schools partner with The Children's Aid Society. Children's Aid provides on-site services, which include medical and dental, after-school enrichment, holiday programs and summer camp. When I say enrichment, I'm not just talking about literacy and math enrichment. I'm talking about activities such as archery, martial arts and young men's initiative activities that they probably wouldn't be exposed to otherwise.

I've seen the difference that participating in these programs has made in the lives of my sons.

Once I knew that my children were involved in a program that can cater to their needs and in partnership along with me as a parent, I decided to go back to college. I was able to obtain employment as well as my associate's degree due to knowing that my children were safe and off the streets. I am now the Parent Guardian Association Board President for both schools. I don't know what I would do if my children couldn't attend this high quality after-school program.

I have been to Albany three times with the Coalition for After-School Funding to advocate for an increase in after-school funding. We know that after-school programs make a difference! I've seen it with my own sons and with many other children. I want more, not fewer, children to participate in after-school programs. In order to prevent a further loss in programs, I am asking the state to invest at least \$30 million more in after-school programs this year. What is more important than our children? Thank you for your time today.