

New York State Citizen Review Panels

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July 8, 2005

Governor George Pataki
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Pataki:

I am writing on behalf of the New York City Citizen Review Panel to urge you to veto the dual track legislation (A313.A and S1574A) when it comes before you. This bill would amend social services law in order to establish seven demonstrations in local social service districts to test a dual track child protective approach for New York State.

Our opposition to this legislation is based on our belief that this legislation would detract from the direction and reforms to which the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) has made a commitment in New York City, a concern regarding some technical issues we have with the bill, and the fact that there is no provision for resources in the bill.

Over the last three years, ACS has made a commitment to quality reform that has resulted in neighborhood based services, improved access to prevention services, and strengthened training for workers. These reforms are significant and we support the changes ACS has made in this direction. One particular technical issue with the bill has to do with track switching. As the legislation is currently written, our understanding is that a new report would have to be made to the SCR if a switch needed to be made on a case. We have a concern that the registry may not accept this new report. In addition, increased funding is needed for costs involved with implementation of this new approach and for an evaluation.

While we support efforts to improve preventive and child welfare services, we do not believe that this legislation would provide the statutory cover needed to sustain the reforms made in New York City. We urge you to veto this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Eric Brettschneider
Co-Chair, New York City Panel

Citizen Review Panels are mandated by federal law. In 1999 the New York Legislature passed S371-b of the Social Services Law establishing panels in New York State to evaluate the extent to which agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with the State's Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Plan, child protection standards set forth in the federal law, and any other criteria that the panel considers important to ensure the protection of children.