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ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Robert M. Graber
Clerk

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November 26, 2012

TO: **The Honorable Erie County Legislature**

FROM: **Robert M. Graber, Clerk**

SUBJECT: **Written Testimony Submitted to Legislature at Public Hearing Concerning 2013 Tentative Erie County Budget**

Attached herewith, please find written testimony submitted to the public record at the Erie County Legislature's public hearing, held on November 19, 2012, concerning the County Executive's tentative 2013 Erie County budget.

Thank you.

United Way
SUCCESS BY 6

Statement to Erie County Legislature: Budget Hearing, November 19, 2012

Your attention is requested regarding an urgent matter with severe consequences for the children and families of Erie County. Erie County Department of Social Services' longstanding funding for the **Success by 6 Program**—in the amount of $98,192 annually—is planned for elimination as of January 1, 2013. This shift reflects altered DSS priorities affected by funding redirection on the federal and state levels. In the interest of our community, I urge you to work toward reinstating this support, which is essential for this critical programming within Erie County.

Success by 6 is a vital service that delivers training, mentoring, Helpline assistance, and early intervention identification for child care providers within Erie County. These providers are responsible for our county's 49,000 children who receive care within their homes and in professional child care facilities. Loss of DSS funding for **Success by 6** pulls the safety net out from under the network of child care providers, putting our young children at great risk by placing them in child care situations that may be ineffective and potentially harmful.

The local **Success by 6** initiative was launched by United Way in 1994, with a mission to create a community where all children are valued, born healthy into a safe and nurturing environment, and reach their highest potential. At present, the program is staffed by a Development Specialist from Kaleida Health's Early Childhood Direction Center and a Training Specialist from Child Care Resource Network, with additional in-kind contributions by each of these organizations, as well as People, Inc. United Way provides in-kind support for program administration and evaluation, as well as linkages to community coalitions, and has invested over $625,000 in local Early Childhood programs within the past three years, many of which rely on **Success by 6** services.

- Together, **Success by 6** partners have secured more than $2.5 million in local, state, and federal dollars to enhance the quality of care that children receive throughout Erie County.
- More than 5,500 child care professionals within Erie County have received training in the social and emotional development of young children.
- An overall success rate of 98% in referring children to needed early intervention services has been achieved.
- There has been an increase of 37% in the number of nationally accredited child care providers in Erie County over three years, providing additional jobs for child care workers.
- Within the past five years alone, **Success by 6** training, mentoring, and assessment have impacted the quality of child care for more than 7,500 young children in Erie County.

It is important to note that for every $1 invested in high-quality child care programming, there is an estimated $7 or greater return for families and communities due to:

- Improved school readiness
- Better academic performance
- Higher graduation rates
- Lower crime and delinquency
- Decreased welfare dependency.

continued on reverse

In communities with high poverty rates, such as the City of Buffalo, where 30% of children live in poverty (*U.S. Census Bureau, 2010*), investing in early child care programs like **Success by 6** is essential. With lack of access to early developmental resources and high-quality child care, children from low-income homes generally enter school one to two years behind their peers. Few ever catch up. Without appropriate early intervention in child care settings, this is compounded as children grow older and results in poor academic performance.

In the Buffalo Public School District, half of all five-year olds are identified as being "at risk for academic failure." Early academic challenges are often related to developmental, mental health, and behavioral issues that have gone unaddressed. When this occurs, young children cannot transition properly to school; this is increasingly evident among our own low-income students. For example, within the 2010-2011 school year, there were 35 suspensions at the pre-kindergarten level and 200 suspensions at the kindergarten level within the Buffalo Public School District (*Buffalo Public School District, 2012*).

This is where **Success by 6** comes in. Given current economic conditions, as well as the clearly identified need for educational reform in the Buffalo Public Schools, opportunities to provide quality child care experiences for young children, as well as high-quality assessments for developmental and behavioral concerns, are vital. These activities are at the core of Success by 6's work.

Success by 6 is currently poised to play an even greater role in our community's support systems for children and families. The program can prove an invaluable link in the delivery systems of coalitions that aim to improve outcomes in high-needs areas. These alliances include Perry Choice Neighborhood, South Buffalo Promise Zone, Buffalo Promise Neighborhood, and Closing the Gap in Student Performance, in addition to Say Yes to Education Buffalo. Loss of **Success by 6** would severely handicap the efforts of these alliances. It would also eliminate the opportunity for **Success by 6** and the County to leverage millions of dollars in government, foundation, corporate, and private investments in these proactive education and community reform initiatives.

Now is the time to choose: We can continue to invest in **Success by 6** today, or we can pay later. Is this a risk our community can afford to take?

Thank you for your consideration of continued funding for this program that is so vitally important to the children, families, and long-term community health of Erie County.

Sincerely,
Michael Weiner,
President and CEO
United Way of Buffalo and Erie County

United Way
of Buffalo & Erie County
742 Delaware Avenue • Buffalo, New York 14209 • 716.887.2626 • uwbec.org

Testimony

Erie County Legislature – November 19, 2012

There is a position funded by the Erie County Department of Social Service known as the Early Childhood Development Specialist. This position, created at the suggestion of the Erie County Coordinating Council on Children and Families under the Gorski administration, was in response to the Columbine High School shooting in April 1999.

The County chose to respond with this position because at the time it understood that to prevent the kind of anti-social behavior that was behind this domestic tragedy – society must start early and care for our youngest children to the very best of our ability – not as individuals but as a community. This position has been consistently funded since then and serves the children and families of this community who need it most – very young children who are at potential risk of developmental or social delay. This position – ably staffed by Tracy Banks of the Early Childhood Direction Center – saves the county much more than it costs in avoided social service, criminal justice and special education costs.

Research shows that for every $1 invested in high quality early childhood services, we save $7 in remediation and juvenile delinquency later in life. Therefore, funding this position not only supports our youngest children and their families it actually saves the county and our school districts money and is one of the most cost-effective investments our community can make.

Over the past five years alone, Ms. Banks and the Early Childhood Direction Center, have directly responded to the needs of more than 7,500 young children, providing assessment support and service referrals for early intervention and special education.

Specifically for Read to Succeed the loss of Ms. Banks' services would be very detrimental to the children and child care providers we serve in our quality improvement project - CARE – Community Alignment for Reading Excellence. Of the 150 children served last year in CARE Home Child Care sites – more than 10 percent of them were observed and referred to services by Ms. Banks. Her services were instrumental in supporting those 17 families and ensuring these young children – ranging from 18 to 36 months – received the support they needed most at the earliest possible opportunity.

Library

I am also here for another reason.

I am here in support of the increase the County Executive put in the budget for the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library.

The library is an incredible partner with Read to Succeed Buffalo. Together with WNED we host a weekly story time at the East Delevan Library with 50 to 100 children under the age of five and eight to ten family child care providers from the neighborhood. The library has become an extension of their home environments and children look forward all week to coming together, having lunch and learning from a great story told with passion and excitement.

This year however we ran into a problem. Because the library is closed on Thursday we could not have our story time participate in Read For the Record- a national initiative to have the most children reading the same book on the same day.

Thank you to County Executive Mark Poloncarz for keeping you campaign promise and restoring a portion of the library funding.

Please I also implore you to reinvest the funding for the Early Childhood Development Specialist position in the Success By 6 contract as well. Our children cannot develop a love of reading if they are not first happy, health and developing to the best of their ability.

Thank you

RESOLUTION

Sponsors: Councilmember Michael J. LoCurto and Councilmember David A. Rivera

Re: Support Funding for Erie County's Vector and Pest Control Program

WHEREAS, the Erie County Executive recently released his recommended 2013 County Budget which included funding for its Vector and Pest Control Program; and

WHEREAS, this program was eliminated in 2011 and its elimination resulted in an increased rat population throughout our community, threatening the health of City of Buffalo residents; and

WHEREAS, the program was restored in 2012 and Erie County has since responded to hundreds of requests for baiting and trapping in the City of Buffalo; and

WHEREAS, the budget is being considered by the Legislature and its minority caucus has released a survey asking residents if they support eliminating funding for the County's Vector and Pest Control Program; and

WHEREAS, this County program is one of the few available to most city residents since there are no County roads or parks in the City of Buffalo.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE RESOLVED, THAT:

The Buffalo Common Council does hereby register its opposition to Erie County eliminating the Vector and Pest Control Program and calls upon the Legislature to include funding for this program in its adopted budget; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT:

A certified copy of this resolution be sent to the Erie County Legislature, Erie County Executive and Erie County Department of Health.

MICHAEL J. LoCURTO
Delaware District Councilmember

DAVID A. RIVERA
Niagara District Councilmember

ARTS SERVICES INITIATIVE
OF WESTERN NEW YORK INC

Erie County 2013 Proposed Budget Notes on the Cultural Sector:

Tod A. Kniazuk, Executive Director, Arts Services Initiative of WNY

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Buffalo, New York 14203

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Importance of County Funding to the Cultural Sector:

- Many state, federal, and out of area foundation grants specifically ask about support from the local government; Erie County funding allows us to leverage additional grants and bring that money back to Erie County.
- The stringent process we go through to get county funding acts as a "seal of approval" of our management and financial practices, which gives confidence to potential individual and corporate givers.
- County funding is one of the few that allows for general operating use, a key piece of our operations as most other grants are for programming only; county funding is a key piece of the puzzle.
- The investment Erie County makes in the cultural sector is significant, though not a significant part of our budgets; in most cases it is under 20% of the total, and in some cases less than 10%. In cases where it is higher this is often because the organization provides its services for free or serves a community that cannot afford to pay full price for quality services.

Impacts of the Cultural Sector on Erie County:

- Economic Development;
- Cultural & Heritage Tourism;
- Job Creation;
- Quality of Life;
- Education;
- Free and Low Cost Services;
- A Growing National and International Reputation;
- Attraction of the Creative Class;
- Developments such as Canalside "Leading with Culture";
- Return on Investment – we generate more sales tax for the county than the county investment.

Conclusion:

- The cultural sector serves every part of Erie County and its citizens, as well as those visiting our area.
- We are a wise investment, and one that is profitable for the county.
- All but $148,000 of the cultural funding was already in the county budget, *prior to the proposed tax increase* – while many factors led to the proposed tax increase, we account for less than 2% of the new expenses in the 2013 proposed budget.

Letter to the editor published November 12, 2012 by *The Buffalo News*

"Arts and cultural organizations are cornerstones of social and economic growth"

With financial support pending from the Erie County government, it is critical now, perhaps more than ever, to identify the myriad ways in which arts and culturals contribute significantly to our region's social and economic growth.

Buffalo Arts Studio is one of 58 such institutions whose measurable success depends largely on continued funding. Since 1991, BAS has operated with a modest staff and Board, who work closely to nurture inter-personal relationships among our many resident and exhibiting artists, students, volunteers, interns, and visitors. Over the years, more than 250 artists have taken advantage of BAS's affordable subsidized studios. We have presented the work of hundreds of emerging and mid-career regional, national, and international artists in solo and group shows, and continue to enrich the community with art classes and professional training for youth and adults—in 2012, BAS was awarded "Best Art Classes" and "Best Arts Administrator" of WNY by *Buffalo Spree*. Our mentorship program encourages self-esteem, creativity, communication, and networking skills, in turn preventing delinquency and promoting identity and a heightened sense of community in high-risk youth. Situated between the East and West Sides in the bustling Tri-Main Center, BAS frequently works with other local organizations on collaborative projects, while events and openings incorporate live music, performances, and artist talks, drawing together individuals from diverse backgrounds to encourage dialogue and cultural understanding.

Buffalo Arts Studio's economic influence is quantifiable and substantial. For several years, BAS played a lead role in planning, budgeting, fundraising, and curating with eleven other arts organizations to create the high-profile, tourist-attracting *Beyond/In Western New York* exhibitions. In 2013, BAS will once again host Trimania, our largest fundraising event, featuring six floors of installations, music, and performances by the area's most talented artists, drawing 3,000 visitors and promoting a wide array of local vendors. In the past four years, artists in shows at BAS have been featured in numerous biennials and major international publications, raising awareness of Buffalo as a thriving, progressive city. Just recently, several works by one of our resident artists were purchased by a major Italian collector directly from his BAS studio—just one example of the positive impact on our local economy resulting from the advocacy we provide.

County Executive Mark Poloncarz has recommended $32,000 for Buffalo Arts Studio in his 2013 budget (10% of our operating budget), a testament to his trust in our programming and outreach. We appreciate the Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance's support for funding and urge the legislative body and general public to continue to recognize the outstanding importance of the arts as a proven vehicle for social and economic growth.

Sincerely,

Cori Wolff
Artistic Director/Interim Executive Director
Buffalo Arts Studio

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Sincerely,

Cori Wolff
Artistic Director/Interim Executive Director
Buffalo Arts Studio

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on behalf of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. My name is Janz Castelo and I am a musician with the BPO. I joined the orchestra in the fall of 2001 having previously lived and worked in Boston, MA and Baltimore, MD. Like myself, the musicians of the BPO hail from all parts of the country and the world, attracted to Buffalo by the BPO's artistic accolades and reputation for musical excellence. Each of our musicians is selected by an arduous audition process that regularly brings over 100 candidates for a single opening in the orchestra. Needless to say, our musicians are talented, dedicated professionals that represent the finest of our profession and we have chosen to make Buffalo our home.

Our music can be heard around the globe on frequent radio broadcasts and our many recordings, which have received critical acclaim and recognition, including two Grammy Awards. Although I value the BPO's role as a cultural ambassador for our city and region, our biggest and most important impact is here at the local level, both culturally and economically.

Last year, 185,995 people attended our performances, including our Youth and Education concerts which reached over 40,000 school children. We regularly partner with local organizations such as the African-American Cultural Center, the West Side Connection, Neglia Ballet, Shea's, UB, Genesee Community College, Buffalo State and more. Our programming offers something for everyone, from Classics to Pops, Rock shows, Broadway, and Family programming.

The BPO's community impact extends beyond Kleinhans Music Hall. Our musicians are very active in the community teaching, performing and volunteering with other musical organizations such as the Chamber Music Society, the Community Music School and Buffalo Suzuki Strings. Many of our local universities and colleges have BPO musicians on faculty. Whether at church, a private lesson, a memorial service, a community center, or the library, most likely you've heard a musician of the BPO in the community.

Now for some numbers: The Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra supports 100 full time jobs and 300 part time jobs with a combined payroll of $7.7 million. We reside in Erie County, own homes and pay property taxes. When people come to a

BPO concert, they visit our restaurants, shops and bars. We are a magnet for an economically vibrant environment. The organization Americans for the Arts measures the BPO's annual economic impact in our community at over $25 million. 92% of our $10 million budget stays in Western NY.

I live in the city and love living there. I own a home in the city, I have two wonderful young children attending public schools and I want the best for our region. Supporting the BPO is an investment in Erie County. We create jobs, attract talented professionals, give back to the community and return dividends on your investment. Though some may ask whether we should invest in the arts, I ask you how can we afford not to. Thank you for your support.

Graber, Robert

From: ljbahler@aol.com
Sent: Tuesday, November 20, 2012 12:21 AM
To: Graber, Robert
Cc: Marinelli, Lynn
Subject: statement in support of 2013 cultural funding

Good evening. It is a special opportunity to be able to have a voice in this meeting, and a large responsibility, realizing that each person speaking here tonight is representing the needs of thousands of Erie County citizens of all ages.

I am a Board member of and singer with the Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus, an organization in its 76th year. The Chorus has always been a musical destination for people who wish to sing great choral/symphonic music in a large group at a high level. Community interaction starts from within, when people whose paths would not otherwise have crossed get to know each other in the Chorus. As the BPC prepares its many programs each season, we then offer our gifts of music to the citizens of the County.

Our Choral Affiliates program partners with area high schools, inviting serious young vocal musicians to be mentored by and perform with our members as part of annual concert programs at Kleinhans. Our proudest cultural partnership is the long term relationship we share with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra.

As a great hospital sees its duty to healing the whole patient, I encourage the leadership of Erie County to see the funding of the many organizations of Greater Buffalo's cultural infrastructure as a vital importance in serving its people, and its continual mission of growing Buffalo and Erie County as a stimulating, cultural, architectural, recreational and education destination.

Thank you.

Ms. Leslie Bahler
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