

January, 2009

The Honorable Jon S. Corzine  
P.O. Box 001  
State House  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0001

Dear Governor Corzine,

As you work with your staff and the agencies to craft your budget proposal for FY 2010, the Junior Leagues of New Jersey urge you to maintain funding for child abuse prevention and assistance to youth aging out of foster care. These activities are vital to New Jersey's ongoing effort to protect vulnerable children.

The Junior Leagues support investments in primary and secondary child abuse prevention programs. We are encouraged by the network of family success centers which Department of Children and Family's Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships (DCPC) has developed, as well as the expanded home visitation programs, and the new Differential Response Initiative, which provides referrals and assistance to troubled families who do not need the child protection system.

In addition to maintaining a focus on prevention, we believe that programs for youth aging out of foster care merit attention. One in particular, the New Jersey Foster Care Scholars Program, provides scholarships for teens in foster care who enroll in college or vocational schools. Demand for the program has been very high; however, its funding source is unstable and insufficient to cover most students' housing costs, thereby presenting a significant barrier to education for these students, who often have no one else to turn to for assistance.

We recognize that you face many difficult decisions during this budget cycle. We urge you to hold the line and fully fund these very important programs. Spending money on them now saves money in the future by reducing the lifelong effects of child abuse and by protecting the state from liability.

Under your leadership and the 2005 Settlement Agreement, New Jersey has finally begun meeting its responsibility to properly protect abused and neglected children. Our citizens want to know that our government is acting in good faith on the reforms you helped negotiate to keep our children safe, and to help those who have suffered abuse to grow up to be successful, healthy, contributing members of society.

Thank you for your time and attention to these matters.

Best Regards,

Teri DiFrancesco  
Chair, Junior Leagues of New Jersey State Public Affairs Committee

SPAC is a statewide, non-partisan committee made up of representatives from each of the eight Junior Leagues of New Jersey who join together to take action on select state and national public issues. Specifically, SPAC works toward the enactment of legislation and initiatives that would improve the quality of life for women and children; improve the quality of education; and improve the environment.