GOVERNOR PATERSON ANNOUNCES TASK FORCE ON TRANSFORMING NEW YORK’S JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Names Panel of National, State and Local Experts to Task Force

Group Will Develop Strategic Blueprint to Address Alternatives to Incarceration, Community Re-Entry and Disproportionate Minority Representation

Governor David A. Paterson today announced the creation of the Task Force on Transforming Juvenile Justice to examine ways to improve New York’s juvenile justice system. The Task Force will develop and design a strategic blueprint for transforming the system, including examining alternatives to institutional placement, ways to assist children’s re-entry into the community, and redefining the conditions of confinement for juveniles across the State.

Additionally, the Task Force will study ways to improve treatment for juveniles in the areas of mental health and substance abuse, and will address the disproportionate number of minority youth in the system. New York’s juvenile justice system currently serves nearly 1,900 children at an approximate annual cost of up to $200,000 per child. More than three-quarters of those children are African-American or Latino.

“It is imperative that our State seek alternatives to a costly system that is not serving New York’s children, families and communities well,” said Governor Paterson. “With 80 percent of the children in New York’s custody released and rearrested within three years, reform of New York’s juvenile justice system will not only provide those children with necessary services for success, but will translate into safer communities across the State.”

Governor Paterson named a panel of national, state and local experts to the Task Force from a variety of fields including law enforcement, academia, government and community-based organizations. The Task Force will be chaired by CUNY’s John Jay College of Criminal Justice President, Jeremy Travis.

New York State Office of Children and Family Services Commissioner Gladys Carrión, Esq. will oversee the Task Force, and The Vera Institute of Justice, a Manhattan-based not-for-profit research center specializing in criminal justice issues, will be responsible for the Task Force’s day-to-day operations.

Commissioner Carrión said: “I am extremely grateful to Governor Paterson for his leadership and continuing support for the transformation of juvenile justice into a program that provides our most
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vulnerable children with the help that they truly need.”

Jeremy Travis, CUNY’s John Jay College of Criminal Justice President and Chairman of the Task Force, said: “Governor Paterson and I are both committed to ensuring the safety of our State’s families and children. I am confident that this task force will enable us to develop a more comprehensive and less punitive approach to the placement of juveniles involved in the juvenile justice system.”

Appointees to the Task Force on Transforming Juvenile Justice include:

Jeremy Travis, President, John Jay College and Chairman of the Task Force
Leslie Abbey, Executive Director, Family Court Legal, NYC Administration for Children Services
Kenneth Brynien, President, Public Employees Federation
Joyce Burrell, Deputy Commissioner, Division of Juvenile Justice, Office of Children and Family Services

John Coppola, Executive Director, Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers
Juan Cartagena, General Counsel, Community Service Society
John E. Carter, Esq., Director, Law Guardian Program for 3rd Department of Appellate Division
Ailin Chen, Senior Policy Associate, Juvenile Justice and Youth Services, Citizens Committee for Children of New York
Joseph Cocozza, Director, National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice
Michael A. Corriero, Judge/Executive Director, Big Brothers & Big Sisters
Jeff Fagin, Professor, Columbia University School of Law
Mishi Faruque, Director of Juvenile Justice, Children’s Defense Fund
Robert Gangi, Executive Director, Correctional Association of New York
Elizabeth Glazer, Chair, Juvenile Justice Advisory Group
Michael Greene, District Attorney, Monroe County
Neil Hernandez, Commissioner, New York City Department of Juvenile Justice
Marty Horn, Commissioner, New York City Department of Probation & Corrections
Debbie Lashley, Executive Deputy, Office of Kings County District Attorney
Donna Lawrence, Executive Director, Reggio Foundation

Assemblyman William Scarborough, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Children & Family Services, said: “Every young person deserves an opportunity to learn from past mistakes in an environment that allows them to excel academically and socially in order to become productive adults in society. I look forward to working with members of the Task Force to find ways toward transforming our juvenile justice system to one that is more community-based and youth development focused.”

Senator Carl Kruger, Chair of the Senate Social Services, Children and Families Committee, said: “It is clear that the current juvenile justice system isn't working, since more than 80 percent of the
youth in the care and custody of OCFS re-offend after release within three years. I am pleased with Governor Paterson’s willingness to examine our juvenile justice system in the hope of creating a balanced approach to juvenile delinquency – one that includes successful and cost-effective community-based solutions – that addresses both the welfare of the child and the interests of protecting public safety.”

Senator Velmanette Montgomery, Ranking Member on the Senate Social Services, Children and Families Committee, said: “I applaud Governor Paterson and Commissioner Carrión for taking this action to reform New York’s juvenile justice system. I welcome the direction the Commissioner is taking to ‘right-size’ the system, and I will continue to support her work in every way that I can.”

The Task Force on Transforming Juvenile Justice will hold its first meeting on Friday, September 26, 2008 at CUNY’s John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

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