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SUOZZI & NYC ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNOUNCE PASSAGE OF 'FAMILY FIRST TRANSITION ACT'; LAW PROVIDES MILLIONS IN FEDERAL FUNDING TO HELP IMPROVE THE LIVES OF NYC'S MOST AT-RISK CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, INCLUDING YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

Following Suozzi's Push, Recently-Passed Federal Budget Deal Includes Approx. \$40M to \$50M For Each of the Next Two Years to Help NYC Children in Foster Care & \$500M for States Across the Country to Implement 'Family First Prevention Services Act'

NEW YORK, NY – Following his advocacy throughout 2019, Congressman Tom Suozzi, along with NYC Administration for Children's Services Commissioner David A. Hansell, today announced passage of the Family First Transition Act (FFTA). The legislation provides millions in federal funding to help improve the lives of children in New York City's foster care system, as well as children at risk of abuse or neglect across the country.

The new law has three major provisions. First, the legislation provides New York City with an estimated \$40M to \$50M for each of the next two years to continue its "Strong Families NYC" demonstration project, which has successfully reduced the length of time New York City children spend in foster care, reduced the likelihood of re-entry for babies into foster care, and improved the well-being of children in foster care. Second, the legislation provides states with transition funding to implement the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), which became law last year. Finally, the legislation eases the requirements related to federal reimbursement for prevention services in the first few years of FFPSA implementation.

"This is a proven program to reduce the number of children in foster care. It makes children's and families' lives better and saves money. With all the division in Washington, I am focused on the nuts and bolts work of government that can actually make people's lives better. Chalk one up for good government," **said Congressman Suozzi.**

"Passage of the Family First Transition Act is an important step for child welfare nationally, and one that will enable New York City to sustain improved foster care outcomes achieved through our federal waiver," **said ACS Commissioner Hansell.** "We're proud that the number of children in New York City's foster care system is at a historic low and, for those in foster care, the waiver has helped us in our mission to promote stability, permanency and well-being for children. I want to thank Congressman Suozzi and Senator Schumer for helping secure this much-needed federal funding, so that we can continue to build on the strides we've made to improve outcomes for our most vulnerable children and families."

In New York City, prevention services have contributed to the dramatic decline in the foster care census. There were nearly 50,000 New York City children in foster care 25 years ago, and 17,000 just a decade ago. Today, there are approximately 8,000 children in foster care. On any given day, ACS prevention programs serve over 24,000 children across New York City, safely keeping children at home and families together.

FFPSA, signed into law in February 2018, will help keep more children safely with their families and out of foster care. FFPSA supports states by providing some funding for evidence-based services to prevent children from entering foster care, and encourages states to reduce their use of congregate care settings for children who come into foster care.

Background:

The *Family First Transition Act* will help states and jurisdictions prepare for and implement FFPSA by:

- **Providing ongoing support to states with child welfare demonstration projects (known as Title IV-E waivers) that ended on September 30, 2019, guaranteeing they will not face a large financial shortfall as they transition to the new law.** In 2014, ACS entered into a Title IV-E Waiver with the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF), with the support of New York State. This waiver demonstration project has allowed ACS to use the IV-E federal funding stream in a flexible manner to offer innovative services to New York City's children in foster care.

New York's Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project, called Strong Families NYC, has had overwhelmingly positive results. Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, one of the premier child welfare research organizations in the nation, conducted an independent evaluation and found that the Strong Families NYC initiative resulted in shorter stays in foster care. For instance, children in foster care during the waiver spent 9 percent fewer days in foster care (an average of 50 fewer days) than children served prior to the waiver. Additionally, ACS was able to dramatically reduce foster care caseloads, enabling caseworkers to provide more intensive, higher quality services and achieving more timely permanency for the children in their care.

The two additional provisions will provide significant assistance so states and localities can more effectively implement FFPSA—keeping children safe at home and in their communities and in family-based settings when foster care is necessary.

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