



New York State Community Action Association

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Call for a Statewide Commission on Poverty and Economic Security

The New York State Community Action Association and its Coalition Partners call on New York State to form a 2007 Statewide Commission on Poverty and Economic Security to examine the impact poverty in New York State and to develop a plan to address it.

Why is 2007 the Right Time for the Statewide Commission?

- New York State has the eleventh highest poverty rate in the country (14.7%).
- 2.76 million New Yorkers including 923,000 children live below the federal poverty level.
- 1.5 million New York City residents (19.1%) live below the poverty line.
- More than half of the residents of the Bronx, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo have incomes below 200% of poverty.
- More than 10% of the residents living in the Bronx, Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo live in extreme poverty with incomes at less than 50% of the federal poverty level.
- Many rural areas and smaller cities like Newburgh and Schenectady meet or exceed these characteristics with less opportunity and resources to correct them.
- African American (21.6%) and Hispanic (25.3%) New Yorkers are disproportionately represented amongst those living in poverty.
- We can do something about it and the time is right for New York State to take a studied approach to the issue.

In 1964 President Lyndon Baines Johnson declared the War on Poverty to end poverty in America. Through the years the programs and individuals that have fought for justice and economic opportunity have slowly won battle after battle but it is a war that never ends. Each generation brings new challenges to this battle and needs to rally resources to continue the fight. In the last few years attention has been brought back to these issues as poverty has begun to increase again and is kindling a new national dialogue. This National attention to poverty was brought to the front in the recent devastation of Hurricane Katrina and the staggering impact this had on the poor in the gulf region. The need to address poverty has emerged as a key component of political campaigns and mainstream media coverage. Several states and national organizations are embracing this opportunity to look again at ways to reduce poverty in America and New York State needs to do the same.

Purpose of a Statewide Commission

Many of New York's individuals, families, and communities are struggling in today's global economy. A Statewide Commission on Poverty and Economic Security would address poverty across the state and work to ascertain the approaches New York State can successfully employ to alleviate the causes and provide resources and opportunities to help individuals and families move out of poverty and achieve economic security. Such a Commission would assess the breadth of poverty within the geographic and demographic diversity of New York State; evaluate the current interface of federal, state and local resources; and develop recommendations for the effective use of current and future State resources. The outcome of the Statewide Commission would be a strategic roadmap for future investment, intervention, and evaluation and make New York State the leading model for addressing poverty in the 21st Century.

The groups and organizations signed in this letter request the establishment of a Commission to address poverty in New York State, to look at what has worked, and to incorporate new approaches to the alleviation of poverty. The Commission must involve a broad spectrum of groups and organizations in this effort, including Community Action, government, non-profit, business, faith-based groups, academics, and others.

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____ Organization: _____

Please sign and return to NYSCAA at 2 Charles Blvd. Guilderland, NY 12084, via fax: 518-690-0498, or email: धारlow@nyscaaonline.org. Questions? Contact Denise Harlow at 518-690-0491, ext. 24.