

NEW YORK
CITY BAR

COUNCIL ON CHILDREN

June 16, 2009

KAREN J. FREEDMAN

CHAIR

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Hon. David A. Paterson

Governor

State Capitol

Albany, NY 12224

Re: Increasing the Number of Family Court Judges

STEPHANIE J. GENDELL

VICE CHAIR

105 E. 22ND STREET

7TH FLOOR

NEW YORK, NY 10010

Phone: (212) 673-1800 ext. 17

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sgendell@cccnewyork.org

Dear Governor Paterson:

On behalf of the Council on Children of the New York City Bar Association, a group comprised of New York City lawyers working on behalf of children, we urge you to address judicial delays for foster children before the end of this legislative session by amending Family Court Act Sections 121 and 131 to increase the number of Family Court Judges in New York City and statewide (respectively).

There is a crisis in New York City's Family Courts. Overburdened judicial caseloads are leading to long adjournments, protracted trials, and unconscionably long foster care lengths of stay for both children who return home to their families and who are eventually adopted. In fact, New York recently failed the federal Child and Family Service Review, ranking almost last among states with regard to length of stay in foster care.

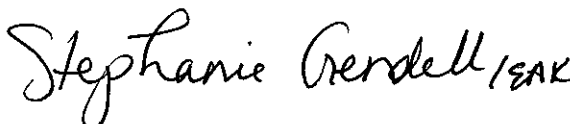
While there have been significant legislative changes regarding enhanced judicial oversight of children in foster care (the 1999 NY Adoption and Safe Families Act and the 2005 New York Permanency Law), legislation increasing the responsibilities of Family Court Judges and Court personnel, and a sustained increase in Family Court filings, there has not been an increase in the number of Family Court Judges in nearly three decades. New York City has not had an additional Family Court Judge since 1991.

In Chief Judge Kaye's final State of the Judiciary she said, "I arrived at the State's High Court directly from a commercial litigation practice, but I stand before you 25-plus years later convinced beyond all else that we must summon our resources and efforts to help the children in our Family Courts." On behalf of the Council on Children, we urge you to use these last few remaining days of the 2009 legislative session to help these children—the children of New York deserve no less.

Sincerely,

/EAK

Karen Freedman
Chair, Council on Children

/EAK

Stephanie Gendell
Vice-Chair, Council on Children

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Hon. Sheldon Silver

Speaker

New York State Assembly

Legislative Office Building 932

Albany, NY 1224

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Sincerely,

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Cc: Assembly Member Helene Weinstein