

VETO MESSAGE:

VETO MESSAGE - No. 132

TO THE ASSEMBLY:

I am returning herewith, without my approval, the following bill:

Assembly Bill Number 7129-A, entitled:

"AN ACT to amend the executive law and the social services law, in relation to the transfer of the state council on children and families from the office of children and family services to the executive department; and to repeal article 10-C of the social services law related thereto"

NOT APPROVED

The Council on Children and Families ("CCF")--which is composed of the heads of 12 agencies--coordinates the efforts of state agencies providing services to children and families, and seeks to develop more streamlined policies concerning these services. CCF was established in a separate article in the Executive Law in 1997. In 2003, the State Legislature repealed those provisions, and re-established CCF within the Office of Children and Family Services ("OCFS") under the Social Services Law.

This bill would now reverse the action taken in 2003, by repealing the Social Services Law provisions, and re-establishing CCF under the Executive Law. The membership and policy functions of CCF remain the same, although CCF would be authorized to unilaterally designate staff from member agencies to work full time on CCF functions, and the Division of the Budget ("DOB") would be authorized to charge fees to member agencies for services provided by CCF.

CCF, OCFS, DOB and the State Education Department all recommend that

this bill be vetoed. The Legislature saw fit just four years ago to move CCF within OCFS for administrative purposes to eliminate a duplicative bureaucracy. The sponsors of this bill are concerned that CCF has become "subservient" to OCFS during the past four years, but no evidence of that has been presented. Indeed, the vast majority of CCF members have changed in just the last seven months, and they are bringing a new focus and energy to the council. The transfer proposed by this bill simply increases administrative costs without providing any substantive benefits to the public.

The bill is disapproved.

(signed) ELIOT SPITZER
