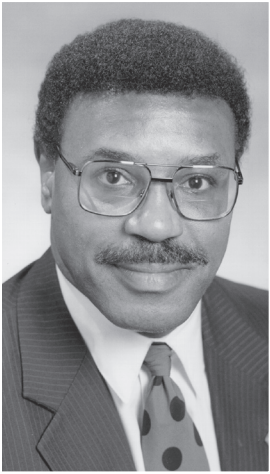


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Assemblyman
William Scarborough
reports to the people

Winter 2010

Dear Friend,

Happy New Year to you! I hope the Holidays were joyous and blessed, and I wish you all the best for the year 2010. This past year was dif cult for many of us, and the New Year will also present severe challenges for those of us in government. New York, like the country and most states, remains in dif cult economic circumstances, and undoubtedly we will have to retrench and tighten our belts as we seek to close a budget gap of about \$6 billion. However, I am con dent that we will weather this storm and emerge a stronger state once this passes. As we undertake budget discussions between now and April 1st, please let me know what issues are important to you or offer any suggestions as to how we should proceed in these tough times.

Despite the circumstances we were able to accomplish many important things, and I will take this opportunity to outline some of the initiatives I have pursued as your representative.

Sincerely,

William Scarborough
Assemblyman, 29th A.D.

LEGISLATION

As chair of the Assembly's Committee on Children and Families, I have seen the many things, both good and bad, that are done by and done to our children and their families in New York State. This has driven much of the major legislation I have pursued in recent years:

Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Youth

This is a landmark piece of legislation that I sponsored and fought for four years to get passed and signed into law. Safe Harbor changes state law and no longer treats children under 17 who engage in commercial sex as criminals, but

classifies them as victims, which is the legal status of every other child under 17 in New York who engages in sexual activities. Under state law, any person under age 17 is considered legally unable to make a ma-

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Assemblyman Scarborough and Aide Shawn Chin-Chance with Rachel Lloyd (right) and workers with Girls Educational Mentoring Service (GEMS). GEMS is the only non-pro t in New York State dedicated exclusively to working with children engaged in commercial sex.

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ture decision to have sex, and whether the sex is consensual or not, their partner can be charged with statutory rape. The only children under 17 not given that presumption of minority are those involved in commercial sex, or child prostitutes. The state's highest court, the Court of Appeals, noted this discrimination in a case in 2004 and urged the Legislature to change the penal code. Through my committee hearings, discussions with these children and those who work with them, I learned of the terrible abuse most of these young people endure. Most are running away from neglect, or physical or sexual abuse. Many begin at 10 or 11 years old, and are introduced to this life by an older friend or boyfriend. They are then subjected to a life of physical and mental abuse, financial dependency or even death, and have less free choice than the average teenager when it comes to having sex.

Safe Harbor does a number of things. It removes the criminal sanctions against these young people and deems them Persons In Need of Supervision (PINS). It provides social services such as counseling and educational opportunities. It provides short term housing, if for example, the child must testify against her pimp who may own the apartment or house where she lives and long term housing, if needed, if the young person can not return to the family home due to prior abuse or other problems. They can remain until age 18. She must follow court mandates, such as cooperating with prosecution or accepting social services, and if she returns to that life, criminal sanctions will be reinstated. Safe Harbor makes New York the first state in the nation to change how these young people are treated and seven other states are looking to follow suit. Safe Harbor goes into effect on April 2010.

Safe Harbor was legislatively paired with the 2007 Human Trafficking Laws, sponsored by Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz, which I co-sponsored. Among other things, this law defined children engaged in commercial sex as victims for purposes of prosecuting their pimp or trafficker, and increased the penalties for the pimp from 2 years to 7 years, to up to 25 years in prison. We felt these two bills increased penalties on the pimps who benefited from exploiting these young people, and gave the youth an opportunity to reclaim productive lives, if they chose to accept the opportunity.

Repeal Mandatory Child Support Orders for Child Care

Tough economic times force more parents to work, and makes affordable child care more important than ever. New York State allows for subsidized child care for workers earning up to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (about \$42,000 for a family of four). The Pataki Administration established a policy that required a single mother applying for a child care subsidy to go to court and file a Child Support Enforcement Order against the father of her child in order to qualify. Even if the father was contributing voluntary child support, the mother was required to file for a court-ordered Child Support Order. If a mother had three children and wanted a child care subsidy for one child, she had to file a Child Support Order against the father for all three children. Women's Groups and child care advocates were outraged at this policy, saying it drove a wedge between fathers and their families, encouraged domestic violence and was designed to discourage people from applying for the subsidies they were legally entitled to. I sponsored the bill repealing this mandatory Support Enforcement Order, as did Sen. Velma-

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Assemblyman Scarborough and Senator Velmanette Montgomery held a hearing at Borough of Manhattan Community College on the city's plan to force 5 year-olds out of day care centers and into public schools.

Fatherhood Initiatives

Experts agree that a major factor in the public welfare and criminal justice problems our children and families face is the absence of a father or male role model in their lives. This is especially true with many of our young men. Huge majorities of kids on welfare, in foster care or in our jails come from fatherless homes or lack male role models to help them grow into productive manhood. Thus, I have become actively involved in efforts to support and encourage fathers relationships with their children, whether married to the mother or living with the children or not. We were instrumental in efforts a few years ago to include fatherhood support initiatives in the state budget. Among these are programs allowing non-custodial low-income fathers to receive the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) if they make less than \$34,000 a year and are up to date on their child support. We also created job training and employment programs for these fathers on the state level. Along with other groups, I have created an organization called the Million Fathers Club (MFC) to encourage and support the fathers in our community in their relationships with their children.



Assemblyman Scarborough and The Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus have become mentors to the young men of the Brighter Choice School for boys in Albany. Assemblyman Scarborough is shown with his mentee, Tian Womack.

Among the initiatives undertaken by the MFC:

A conference on **“Responsible Fatherhood”** at the St. Albans Family Life Center in March 2009.

In **April 2009**, the MFC sponsored a viewing of the documentary **“For Our Sons”** by Eric McKay and Vanz Chapman at York College. The film chronicles the trials and triumphs of urban men in New York City.

In **August**, as part of my Family Day Event at Brookville Park, we had a special Ice Cream Social for fathers who brought their children to the event.

In **September 2009**, we participated in the citywide **“Dads Take Your Child to School”** event on the first day of school. I was an honorary City Wide Marshall of this event.

In **October** the MFC sponsored a **“Workshop on Marriage”** at the Family Life Center. The workshop was run by Nisa Muhammed, a prominent relationship expert who was featured in the CNN series **“Black in America 2.”**

In **December 2009**, we sponsored a Toy Give-away for needy children, where a special emphasis was placed on having these children be accompanied by their fathers. The MFC will continue to support fatherhood initiatives in 2010 and beyond.

