



Redlich Horwitz Foundation

2024

A Year of Powering Partnership and Progress



Introduction

In 2024, the **Redlich Horwitz Foundation** launched our refined philanthropic approach to invest more resources in keeping families intact by increasing community-driven supports that promote child and family well-being and reducing unnecessary system involvement. Following an intensive statewide listening tour with advocates, families, and community leaders, we identified four integrated strategies to guide our grantmaking priorities.

mobilize

Movement and Power Building



influence

Policy and Advocacy Action for Change



reimagine

Community Response for Child and Family Well-being



support

Youth Who Experience the Foster System

We set ambitious strategic funding goals for achieving a more just and equitable New York where all children and families have what they need to thrive together. To realize this vision, we support efforts to bolster the building blocks for family justice.

Building Blocks for Family Justice



Protect the Constitutional Rights of Parents

Redirect Public \$ to Community-driven Family Supports

Limit Mandatory Reporting

Distinguish Between Conditions of Poverty and Child Neglect Allegations

Eliminate Long-term Congregate Care



This progress report looks back at an energetic first year of cultivating partnerships and supporting action focused on examining, challenging, and transforming child welfare. As allies of New York’s growing Family Justice Movement, the RHF staff and board trustees are honored to stand alongside our grantees, fellow funders, and system leaders who are exploring more effective, cost-efficient, and humane ways of supporting children and preserving family integrity.



RHF encourages shared power and decision-making to identify concrete solutions that uphold parental rights, expand community resources, and limit the scope of child welfare system involvement in families’ lives.

We are excited to highlight a few examples demonstrating the power of building and connecting a diverse advocacy infrastructure to advance reforms that support rather than surveil families. The initial wave of positive momentum accomplished during the past year is further enhanced by the courageous, resilient individuals who share their system experiences to advocate for bold policy and practice changes at the state level and within their communities.



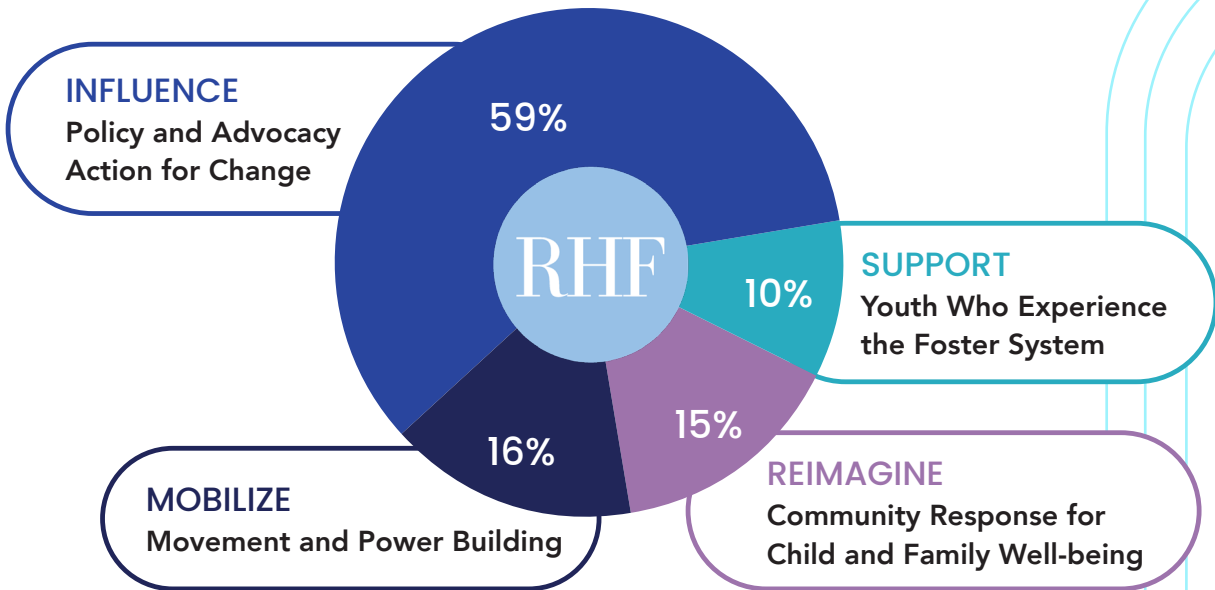
2024: A Year of Powering Partnership and Progress



Our grantmaking supports a spectrum of partners dedicated to improving the lives of children and families across New York.

In 2024, RHF awarded 36 grants representing a \$6.2 million investment.

2024 Grantmaking by Strategy



Elevating Stories that Matter

Storytelling spaces give parents and young people with system experience a platform to voice their concerns, hold leaders accountable, and reshape public perceptions about child welfare as they advocate to end harmful practices that disrupt families.



RHF supported three **Story Labs** in 2024, including a January event in Rochester focused on the intersection of school discipline and child welfare. The [Solutions Not Suspensions](#) statewide campaign aims to address harmful practices that disengage students from getting an education.

The **Narrowing the Front Door to NYC's Child Welfare System Coalition (NTFD)** is led by people with lived experience, nonprofit leaders, scholars, and legal advocates focused on shrinking the scope and scale of child welfare interventions while increasing direct investment in under-resourced families and communities.

In 2024, NTFD hosted multiple forums, including a three-part series co-convened with three NYC foster care agencies. These events educated frontline workers about the history of child welfare and the harm caused by family separation and pressed agency staff and leadership to prioritize family supports over punitive measures.

The group also worked with the City's administration to secure funding to establish an accountability council. Additionally, NTFD led efforts to raise awareness about essential tools, like direct cash assistance to vulnerable families that are most likely to come to the attention of child welfare authorities due to conditions of poverty too often misinterpreted as child neglect.



The Imprint
YOUTH & FAMILY NEWS

The Imprint, an independent daily news outlet of **Fostering Media Connections**, conducts in-depth investigative reporting that sparks national conversations about critical child welfare issues.

In December 2024, a [two-part series](#) chronicled the troubling experiences of maternal patients who were subjected to non-consensual hospital drug testing. This practice often leads to CPS investigations and, in some cases, the loss of custody of their children. The [coverage](#) addressed common misconceptions about medication-assisted treatment and ongoing discriminatory policies that violate patient rights, disrupting bonding between mothers and their newborn babies. Additionally, Imprint's newsletter and weekly podcast also feature expert interviews, research findings, and proposed solutions to drive system reform.





**Funding Areas and
Partner Spotlights**



mobilize

Movement and
Power Building

Goal

INCREASE THE CAPACITY AND READINESS FOR LOCAL AND STATEWIDE ENGAGEMENT IN ADVOCACY TO EMPOWER AND CONNECT THE YOUTH, PARENTS, AND COMMUNITIES HISTORICALLY TARGETED FOR FAMILY SURVEILLANCE.

2024 Insights

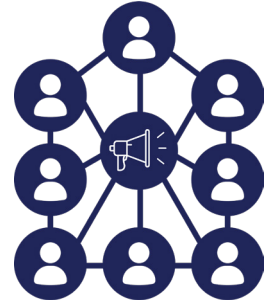
- The Family Justice Movement is an expanding, broad-based group of committed stakeholders gaining strength and influence throughout the state.
- Direct service and movement-building have to work hand in hand. Advocates draw inspiration and ideas from individuals who have firsthand experience with issues requiring attention and policy solutions.
- Power-building originates locally. It often starts with families gathered at their kitchen tables and grows through community mobilization around common goals.
- Community organizers across New York, especially outside of NYC, often feel isolated. They value opportunities for facilitated discussions that deepen connections, foster collective learning, and align strategies.



“Building for Community Action” Cohort

RHF disbursed \$200,000 to mobilize community leaders, grassroots organizations, lived experience experts, and other stakeholders as part of the Foundation’s first-ever open call for proposals to strengthen local movements and community-based advocacy.

The inaugural “**Building for Community Action**” cohort features 11 partners engaged in community organizing or direct services on issues that intersect with child welfare, such as mental health, juvenile justice, criminal justice, and equitable access to resources for families. Over the past year, grantees hosted community forums, action days, and other activities to voice concerns about the impact of family surveillance and separation and propose community-centered alternatives to the existing child welfare response.



Albany & Rensselaer Counties

Community Rising Project provided safe spaces for youth and families to heal while opening dialogue to learn about upcoming advocacy opportunities. **Troy 4 Black Lives** hosted monthly “*Mothers Recoop*” peer support meetings and community education events concerning the child welfare system. **Capitol District Latinos** hosted three educational panels to deepen the community’s understanding of child welfare policies and practices and raise awareness about family rights. Similarly, **Saratoga BLM** also educated families about their rights at local events including, the *Emancipation Day Freedom Fest*.

Monroe County

Diverse Mosaic held a *CPS Teach-in Block Party* to offer Know Your Rights training to 97 community members, including information about proposed Family Miranda legislation. **Refugees Helping Refugees** facilitated five workshops to educate 100 refugees about parenting expectations and cultural norms related to schooling to avoid misunderstandings and deter unnecessary contact with Child Protective Services. **Flower City Noire** hosted two community conversations to share stories, nurture connections, and find common ground for future advocacy action. **BIPOC Peeeeek** organized parents and caregivers of children with mental health issues to participate in advocacy days.

Long Island

Make the Road NY’s Youth Power Project provided leadership development and base-building political education to 15 youth leaders focused on how the child welfare and immigration systems intersect and exacerbate family separation.

Westchester County

914United engaged young people and families dually impacted by the child welfare and juvenile justice systems through its **Credible Messenger Mentorship** program, building partnerships with schools, probation, corrections, and the Department of Social Services.

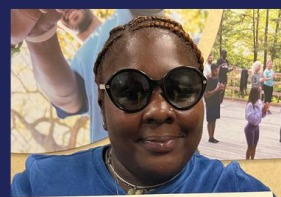


In April 2024, **Movement for Family Power** gathered 25 national family justice movement leaders to explore how MFP could better serve their communities. Participants at the four-day retreat helped shape the vision and operational framework of MFP's Movement Hub, ensuring equitable access to support. The group also defined MFP's role in assisting advocates in navigating conflict and focused on healing and relationship-building work that is crucial for developing sustainable movements.

Additionally, MFP played a key role in supporting the **Black Mother's March on the White House** by serving on the planning steering committee. This event, held in May 2024, was organized by a coalition that helps families regain custody of their children from foster care. MFP created and distributed promotional materials and provided event funding, including for people with lived experience to travel to the march in Washington, D.C.



In November, MFP co-hosted the **"Breaking Silos in Reproductive Justice"** symposium in partnership with If/ When/How and the Center on Reproductive Rights and Justice at Berkeley Law. The event aimed to build solidarity and support between the family justice and reproductive justice movements. Award-winning author Dorothy Roberts delivered keynote remarks emphasizing the connections between the politics of abortion, pregnancy, and family policing. Attendees engaged in lively discussions about strategies that promote family integrity, reduce harm, and enhance cross-movement collaboration.

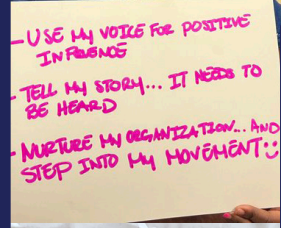
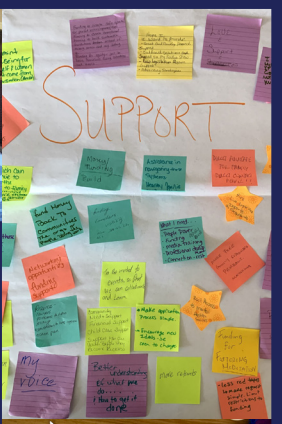


Are You Ready to Tell Your Story?

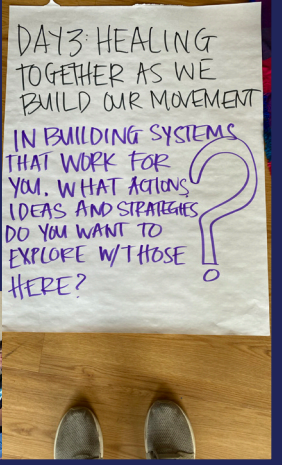
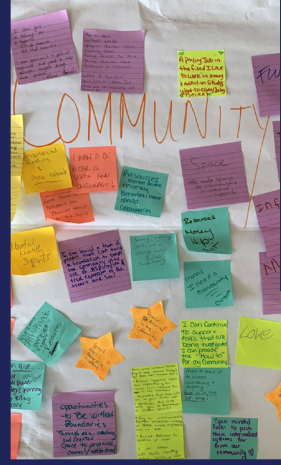
Emotional Readiness
Choosing a story that you own, not the one that still owns you.

Can You Remain Grounded During Sharing?
Can you contemplate the content and its meaning separate from who you are now without reliving the stress of it?

Three Questions to Ask Yourself:
Why do you want to tell this story? What do you hope will happen? How will you feel if you don't get the outcome you're hoping for?



In July 2024, RHF convened the first-ever **New York State Lived Experience Expert/ LEX Retreat**, providing a safe, affirming environment for 58 system-impacted young people and adults to focus on local and cross-state coordination of advocacy efforts in communities historically affected by family surveillance. The retreat was designed by the Movement-Building Steering Committee, comprised of lived experience leaders from across the state. Attendees participated in three days of personal healing, facilitated learning, and bonding activities to discover their potential for shared power and collective action to reimagine child welfare. Lively discussions generated strategies that promote family integrity, reduce harm, and enhance cross-movement collaboration.





influence

Policy and Advocacy
Action for Change

Goal

ADVANCE INITIATIVES THAT DISRUPT THE CHILD WELFARE PIPELINE BY LIMITING THE HARMFUL IMPACT OF MANDATORY REPORTING AND UNWARRANTED INVESTIGATIONS.

2024 Insights

- Community organizers, service providers, and system-impacted people across New York are passionate about advocating for bold change in child welfare. Many need support, guidance, and room to experiment as they develop deeper skill sets to enhance their impact.
- Collaborations aimed at shaping and promoting policy solutions involve individuals with varied perspectives and experiences. Advocacy success largely hinges on creating opportunities for brainstorming, open dialogue, and consensus-building to identify and align priorities.
- To achieve systemic change, solutions need to be sourced from the communities most directly impacted. Passing a law or budget reform on its own will not lead to the lasting change families desire. True change requires systems of accountability that ensure practice on the ground shifts.





FAMILY JUSTICE LAW CENTER

The **Family Justice Law Center** scored a strategic litigation win by filing an appeals case regarding issues with emergency removals and timely family court hearings, and addressing CPS interactions affecting non-respondent parents who have experienced domestic violence. FJLC's landmark lawsuit to protect Fourth Amendment rights received a positive decision in one of the cases to date. Media coverage of these case filings also supported important narrative-shift context by amplifying the challenges families experience with the child welfare system. Additionally, the Center established new statewide relationships with legal and advocacy partners through outreach and trainings on their core issues.

New Hour for Women and Children - Long Island expanded its capacity to provide hybrid direct service/political education support to women reentering from carceral settings in Long Island.



The organization bridges gaps between the criminal legal and child welfare movements through training and leadership of the *Long Island Social Justice Action Network* to serve members dually impacted by these systems.

The **New York Mandated Reporting Workgroup (MRWG)** is a collaboration of advocates, including mandated reporters, researchers, lawyers, and people directly affected by family surveillance. The group is dedicated to overhauling the current policies, practices, and legal definitions that require professionals who work with children and families to report suspected child abuse and neglect.



In 2024, the MRWG launched a public awareness campaign, released a [report](#), and presented its findings and recommendations across the state. Their goal is to demonstrate how the existing reporting laws often lead to wasteful and invasive investigations without evidence that these laws genuinely protect children.

After completing extensive policy research, the MRWG developed a solutions framework aimed at narrowing the scope of mandated reporting. This approach seeks to keep children safe while reducing harm to families. Additionally, the group invited community members to share their experiences with the system at storytelling events and public hearings, advocating for reforms to the mandated reporting laws and the state central registry.

Legal Services of Hudson Valley and **Erie County Assigned Counsel** lead two different legal advocacy pilots offering early defense services to low-income families under CPS investigation. Records show that access to timely legal counsel effectively reduces the likelihood that a petition will be filed against a family in over 90% of cases of alleged child abuse and neglect. These programs show great potential for minimizing trauma and disruption for thousands of New York families each year.



Timely Legal Defense



reimagine

Community Response
for Child and Family
Well-being

Goal

SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF COLLABORATIVE SPACES AND CAPACITY FOR LIVED EXPERIENCE EXPERTS, ADVOCATES, AND SYSTEM LEADERS TO INCUBATE INNOVATIVE IDEAS THAT KEEP FAMILIES INTACT.

2024 Insights

- The Family Justice Movement is clear-eyed about ending harmful child welfare practices that cause distress and disrupt families under investigation. However, developing new support system models that prioritize healing and uphold family integrity requires deeper collaboration and more community-based resources.
- The differences between child abuse, neglect, and conditions of poverty are widely misunderstood. Public perceptions and a lack of understanding about child welfare policies and practices perpetuate an overreliance on costly and unwarranted system responses that fail to address unmet family needs.
- To effectively replace an ineffective status quo, we must first acknowledge the negative system impacts that deeply affect families and communities before developing culturally responsive community-based solutions that promote family wellness and autonomy.



Partner Spotlights



Rise

Led by people impacted by the child welfare system, **Rise** empowers parents to be leaders and create communities that invest in families by offering collective care, healing, and support.

With funding from RHF and a new federal grant, Rise's **Peer Community Care Network** innovative model is reimagining how to connect parents to the information and resources they need to help families address challenges without intervention from ACS. In 2024, Rise Peer Supporters assisted more than 40 families in the Bronx neighborhoods with high CPS investigation rates and launched a pilot program training 20 youth peer leaders. Additionally, Rise's advocacy and organizing team, The Parents' Platform, released two reports supporting their policy priorities to expand childcare and decrease the harm caused by mandated reporting: [The State of Childcare in NY State: A Need for Respite Care](#) and [An Analysis of Rise's Mandated Reporting Surveys and A Call to Action](#).



Office of Children and Family Services



Research is underway to evaluate a **direct cash transfer pilot** that began in July 2023 in Westchester, Syracuse, and Rochester. This program provided \$500 monthly stipends to 150 families previously under CPS investigation. The research project seeks to strengthen the evidence supporting direct cash payments as an alternative strategy for preventing deeper, costlier child welfare involvement and child removals. One goal of the research study is to submit the findings for approval in the federal Family First Clearinghouse, which recognizes evidence-based models eligible for federal IV-E reimbursement. A findings report is scheduled for publication in early 2026.

HOPE585 is dedicated to creating a relationship-centered community for Rochester youth and families impacted by the child welfare system, helping them transition from trauma to a place of power and belonging.

Last fall, the organization launched the **Reimagine Initiative** to engage a diverse group of stakeholders in co-designing and sustaining a community-driven response to child poverty issues that often lead to unnecessary child welfare involvement in Monroe County. Additionally, they hosted a Town Hall, which served as the first public forum in the county where community members could share their experiences with the child welfare system and its impact on local families.



HOPE 585
HOPE. HEAL. THRIVE.

COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES WITH CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

WHERE: HOPE 585 • 111 N. Chestnut St
WHEN: Oct 30 • 6-8PM*
*Doors open & dinner provided at 5:30PM

Thank you to our event sponsors.



TOWN HALL





support

Youth Who
Experience the
Foster System

Goal

CONTINUE TO SUPPORT STRATEGIES THAT ENSURE YOUNG PEOPLE WITH EXPERIENCE IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM CAN CONNECT, HEAL, LEAD, AND THRIVE.



Our legacy commitment to system-impacted young people focuses on minimizing harm and maximizing opportunity by limiting restrictive congregate care placements and supporting their stable transition to adulthood.



Partner Spotlights

In 2024, the **Fostering Youth Success Alliance (FYSA)** secured \$8.282 million in public funding for the **Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYCSI)** to improve higher education outcomes for youth who have experienced foster care across the state. The program provides financial and academic support to help these students achieve their educational goals.

FOSTERING YOUTH SUCCESS ALLIANCE

Improving policy. Uplifting lives.

Since its inception, FYCSI has significantly expanded, growing from an initial investment of \$1.5 million in 2015, which benefited 350 students, to the current funding level that supports 1,285 students during the 2024-25 academic year.

In January 2024, the Rockefeller Institute released a [program evaluation report](#), which indicated students enrolled in FYCSI had higher retention rates from their first to second year in college compared to Pell Grant recipients, under-represented minority groups, and SUNY students overall. Additionally, FYCSI recipients attending SUNY schools consistently posted higher graduation rates for associate degrees than their peers with a foster care background and Pell Grant recipients.

Led by the **Children's Defense Fund – NY**, the **YouthNPower** intergenerational coalition works closely to align and advance policy priorities that address challenges with congregate care placements. YNP links research, organizing, and advocacy to fight for a collective future that reimagines support and policy for youth and families in crisis.



In 2024, youth and parents with lived experience co-designed eight recommended solutions focused on limiting the use and impact of institutional foster care placements.



Center for Justice Innovation

The **Center for Justice Innovation** leads the **Families First Court Initiative** to facilitate cross-system collaborations that provide wraparound support services for court-involved youth and their families, lessen congregate care use, and disrupt cycles of system involvement.

In 2024, Families First established a new partnership between the Council on Addiction Prevention and Education of Dutchess County and the Probation Department. This collaboration aims to increase knowledge about youth substance abuse and the developmental needs of court-involved adolescents. Additionally, Families First connected the Dutchess County Department of Community and Family Services with You Gotta Believe, a nonprofit organization dedicated to finding forever families for adolescents, including those in congregate care. The Center also presented the Families First model to a national audience at the 2024 Social Work and Law Symposium.

Leveraging Philanthropy to Strengthen Families



RHF actively participates in several private funding collaboratives dedicated to safeguarding child well-being by ensuring families receive the support they need to thrive and stay together.



Founded in 2018 by RHF and the New York Community Trust, **Youth + Families Forward** is a collaboration of seven foundations that have allocated over \$6 million for public-private partnerships, participatory grantmaking, and advocacy initiatives.

2024 Highlights

- Supported the **Fair Futures Youth Advisory Board's** efforts to fully fund its successful coaching and tutoring model for youth who have experienced foster care and improve housing stability for transition-age youth.
- Co-funded with Casey Family Programs, a collaboration between NYC ACS and NYC Health + Hospitals focused on **reducing child abuse/neglect calls to the SCR** by connecting patients directly to supportive services rather than referring them to CPS for investigation.
- Created a **new participatory grantmaking fund** led by a committee of parents impacted by the child welfare system. These parent leaders determine funding priorities and strategies for disbursing \$700,000 in grants to strengthen community-led organizations that address the needs of NYC children and families without intrusive system involvement and harmful family disruption.

The Child Welfare Funders Group is a national network of foundation leaders focused on child welfare issues. RHF provided a grant to support a White House convening in partnership with the Domestic Policy Council. The event emphasized priorities and recommendations such as separating poverty from family neglect, offering material support and direct cash assistance to families in need, enhancing resources for kinship caregivers, and promoting youth-driven permanency options.

Convening Communities.

• Collecting Perspectives.

• Cultivating Relationships.

• Connecting Champions.

Over the past 20 years, New York has successfully reduced family separation and the foster care census. Still, there is more work to do as the number of families subject to invasive, harmful, and mostly unwarranted CPS investigations has remained steady. A shift in the culture and strategy for keeping children safe is especially urgent, given numerous studies that document the long-term effects of child removals and other adverse childhood experiences.

RHF partners are at the forefront of the growing Family Justice Movement.

We will continue to listen and learn from people with lived experience, child welfare leaders, advocates, legislators, and grassroots organizations working to build community power and redesign more responsive, accessible, and effective family support networks.



We recognize that advancing a transformational change agenda led by families and community advocates requires more than financial resources.

This emerging movement needs advocacy tools, operational support, communication strategies, and specialized training to drive county and state actions that influence public opinion and policymakers. It is also essential to pay extra attention to organizations and coalitions outside of New York City to ensure a balanced and broad geographic reach for future advocacy campaigns in New York State.

As we move into the second year of implementing strategies guided by our funding framework, RHF is committed to enhancing our grantmaking portfolio with investments in capacity-building technical assistance, political education, and opportunities to connect with influential networks. These complementary supports will empower “next-level” organizing efforts and encourage cross-movement collaborations.

RHF

WE WILL CONTINUE TO SHARE PROGRESS AND INSIGHTS FROM OUR PARTNERSHIPS AS WE SUPPORT MOVEMENT-BUILDING AND COLLECTIVE ACTION TO ACHIEVE EQUITY AND JUSTICE FOR NEW YORK FAMILIES.



OUR MISSION:

The **Redlich Horwitz Foundation** invests in transformative strategies that ensure children and families thrive together in well-resourced communities across New York. Our grantmaking strengthens a growing movement to end unnecessary surveillance and separation by the child welfare system and expand community-driven supports that promote child well-being and keep families intact.

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