

PRESS STATEMENT

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom's Leadership Undermines Safety of Families in San Francisco

January 28th, 2009

San Francisco--- Today, community advocates were shocked and outraged to learn that after months of rumors, Mayor Gavin Newsom has fired nationally-acclaimed advocate Margaret Brodtkin as his senior staffperson on children and family issues. While the Mayor's Office released a statement claiming "Margaret Brodtkin is leaving her position in order to become the Director of the New Day for Learning Initiative," Ms. Brodtkin herself issued a statement saying "Although he [Mayor Newsom] has praised my service and called me a 'superstar,' Mayor Newsom has asked me to leave DCYF [Department of Children, Youth and their Families]. Today will be my last day as Director. I am disappointed to be unable to complete the work that I have begun."

We are a coalition of San Francisco community leaders concerned that the Mayor's dismissal of Brodtkin puts the leadership of the city's key department for kids at risk and our children in harm's way. In 2004, Mayor Newsom hired Ms. Brodtkin, the author of the city's special set-aside called the Children's Fund back in 1991, with glowing admiration for her role in creating such a unique system of city support for children – unparalleled anywhere in the nation.

Four years later, in the midst of an historic budget crisis and the Mayor Newsom's run for Governor of California, the Mayor has dismissed the well-respected Brodtkin, setting the stage for a possible raid, erosion or elimination of the Children's Fund and other critical services for our kids and families. Dan Macallair, Executive Director of the Center for Juvenile and Criminal Justice, said that without strong leadership for families in the city, "We're talking about getting rid of safe places for kids to go after school, programs that keep kids out of gangs and help them make better life choices. We need the Mayor to help families in these tough times, not take from them."

Jessica Mele, of the Performing Arts Workshop, said, "It's just irresponsible of Mayor Newsom to fire a key leader at this time of economic crisis, and to even consider getting rid of the city's special safety net for kids. Being a fiscal conservative may play well with some voters, but voters across California also care about our kids and we don't want to see vulnerable children fall through the cracks, becoming another homeless or homicide statistic."

"The Mayor's firing of Ms Brodtkin will backfire. He may be worried that the 'Yes on 8' foes of same-sex marriage will derail his plans for Governor, but he doesn't realize that now he will have the **real family values advocates** against him – those of us who believe in marriage equality and a safety net to support our kids," said NTanya Lee, Executive Director of Coleman Advocates for Children & Youth.

Every Californian should be watching, and should be concerned about Mayor Newsom's commitments to children here in San Francisco.

Community advocates plan to demonstrate their concern for the future of San Francisco children and families next Thursday, February 5th, 2009 at city hall. Please call Chelsea Boilard at Coleman Advocates for more information about the action at 415.239.0161.

For further comment:

NTanya Lee, Executive Director, Coleman Advocates for Children & Youth. C: 415.412.3848

Claudia Jasin, Executive Director, Jamestown Community Center. C: 415.516.6845

Chelsea Boilard, Coleman Advocates. C: 415.218.2764

Dan Macallair, Executive Director, Center of Juvenile & Criminal Justice, c: 415.722.1191

Jessica Mele, Performing Arts Workshop, 415.673-2634x201

Meital Amita, Safety Network, 415.713-2115

Carol Hill, Richmond Village Beacon, 415.750-8554