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Celebrating 30 Years of Committed Service to Our Community: 1978 - 2008

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Loss of Program Means Loss of Jobs and Educational Opportunities for Youth –But There is Hope

Charlotte, NC (June 11, 2008) –The Urban League of Central Carolinas is fighting to keep at-risk and adjudicated youth educated, working, and productive in Mecklenburg County. In the midst of record unemployment and job loss, the US Department of Labor has terminated all funding for Urban Youth Empowerment Programs (UYEP) all over the country. UYEP is a national workforce development program that targets at-risks and adjudicated youth ages 18-21 years of age. This program exists in twenty-seven communities and twenty states throughout the country. For the past three years, the Department of Labor allocated over \$420,000 yearly to the Urban League of Central Carolinas and Mecklenburg County for this program.

UYEP has proven to be a highly successful way of combating the recidivism, education, and employment issues faced by the youth who benefit from the program. In this program, youth are provided with a vast array of workforce development services including GED preparation in partnership with CPCC, life skills classes, community service with the faith-based community and opportunities for work experience. The Urban League has also forged strong partnerships with local employers to place youth in full-time jobs in addition to enrolling youth into higher education, vocational training, or preparing them for military enlistment. Over the years, the Urban League of Central Carolinas has been ranked in the top five by the Department of Labor and National Urban League in every measurable category for its UYEP program.

"This action comes at a time when no substantial federal funding exists for general summer jobs for youth across the nation...and teen unemployment is as high as its been in 50 years," states Marc Morial, National Urban League President and CEO. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for Black teens ages 16-19 is 32.3 percent, twice the rate of the 16.4 percent for White teens in the same age group; and nearly twice the rate of 17.5 percent for Latino teens.

Thirty-seven members of the Congressional Black Caucus, including 12th District Congressman Mel Watt, signed a letter to President George Bush citing that the program is in 27 high crime cities that need these services desperately. In his letter, Watt wrote, "The program represents the best that our communities have to offer by providing educational and job training assistance to the hardest to serve youth in ways that encourages partnerships with faith-based organizations and local employers. These collaborative partnerships and intense support for at-risk youth ultimately achieve improved outcomes for individual participants, healthier communities and a better-equipped workforce."

Local Urban League President, Dr. Patrick Graham has expressed a new resolve for the issue. "We are going to intensify our Membership Campaign around these issues," Graham said. "We must solicit more private support from individuals who can fund these programs and allow us to be even more innovative in our efforts to assist young people and give them hope." The Urban League of Central Carolinas is in the midst of a Membership and Sustaining Campaign, which funds a third of all its youth programs. The Urban League hopes this new focus will win over new donors and members and increase the number of young people served in this community.

For more information about the Urban Youth Empowerment Program or Membership/Sustaining Campaigns, please contact 704-373-2256 ext. 205, visit www.urbanleaguecc.org, or email info@urbanleaguecc.org.

About Urban League of Central Carolinas, Inc.

Founded in 1978, the Urban League of Central Carolinas is a multi-service, non-profit Agency that has proudly served over 25,000 people in the Central Carolinas region. Since 1910, the National Urban League is the nation's oldest and largest community based movement devoted to empowering disenfranchised communities to enter the economic and social mainstream.