

State Legislators Join A Powerful Array of Statewide Advocacy Groups, Child Care Provider Networks, Unions, Policy Experts in Save NY Child Care Campaign

Albany, NY—Today, over 500 New York parents, early care educators, child care providers and activists came together virtually to call on New York State to invest \$500 million in federal and state funds this year to save the child care sector, which has been battered by the impacts of the recession and set New York on a path to provide access to high-quality child care to all New York families. State legislative champions and national and statewide organizations urged participants to join in the Empire State Campaign for Child Care/Winning Beginning NY *Save NY Child Care Campaign*. The Campaign is focused on securing \$500 million in new state funding this year to stabilize and rebuild the child care system. The groups are also working to influence the state plan, due by February 25, 2021, that outlines how new federal child care funding will be allocated and distributed. The event was held on Zoom and also livestreamed on Facebook. A recording will be available soon.

New York State's child care system was already in crisis before 2020. During the pandemic, providers stepped up to serve the children of essential workers, often at great risk to themselves and their families, with little recognition or assistance. Most are now averaging 40 percent of their previous capacity and have taken on personal debt, and many have closed their doors. Black and Brown women represent a large percentage of child care providers, and so have shouldered the greatest burden of this unfolding crisis. Working families and employers have been directly impacted as the lack of child care has forced thousands of women to leave the workforce. There can be no economic recovery without child care. New York State must act now to save the system from collapse.

Sade Moonsammy, Chief of Staff at the national organization Family Values at Work, said, "The sobering reality is that the average New York child care worker makes just over \$25,000 per year, and the average cost of child care is over \$13,000. These numbers are unacceptable! Today, we are coming together to demand that our leaders include \$500 million for child care and early education so that New York's economy can recover, New York's children can be safe, and New York's parents and caregivers can get back to work with the peace of mind that their children are in good care."

Pam Wells, President, CSEA/Voice Local 100A, is also a provider and knows from experience how much is at stake for the child care provider community. "Child care programs have shuttered. It is time to move forward with resilience, resources, and respect. There can be no recovery without access to quality child care."

Dede Hill, Director of Policy, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy and a co-facilitator with the Empire State Campaign for Child Care, said, "The COVID-19 pandemic has dealt a terrific blow to New York's child care sector and families that rely on it. Child care providers have been forced to lay off educators, or even close their doors; many are hanging on by a thread. Yet, there is real opportunity in this moment for our struggling child care system. The Governor's Child Care Availability Task Force is about to release an ambitious, comprehensive plan to move toward universal access. New York will be receiving significant federal relief funds which can be used, along with state and ongoing federal funds, to implement the Task Force plan and begin rebuilding. This is our time, New York, to recognize – and fund – child care as a public good that is accessible to all!"

Gladys Jones, founder and President of ECE on the Move, a powerful network of providers in New York City, said, “The success of our recovery is directly tied to investment in child care, yet those who provide child care are largely overlooked as a professional workforce deserving of quality pay. Early child care professionals are “raising” children—thousands of them from every part of the state. If there is no investment, what will this mean for the next generation? We know that New York State has the capacity and resources to lead on any change that needs to happen across the country, if we decide to do it. Right now, it’s time to lead on child care. A large group of state legislators took time in the middle of a busy day at the Legislature to speak to the challenges and opportunities for child care at this time.

“There will be no economic recovery without childcare. When we invest in childcare we invest in our future,” said **Senator Jabari Brisport, newly appointed Chair of the Senate Committee on Children and Families**.

Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Children & Families, said, “We have a huge opportunity to help thousands of kids, parents, and childcare providers, and to set a new standard for the way New York operates with childcare from now on. The advocacy is there, the funding is there - now Governor Cuomo must release our available resources and begin to implement the recommendations from the Child Care Availability Task Force.”

Senator Shelley Mayer, Chair of the Senate Committee on Education, said, “Child care, along with education, is one of the most pressing equity issues of our day. Working parents, particularly mothers, simply cannot work without security, they will have affordable, quality child care for their children. New York State must ensure that much-needed federal funds for child care get out the door promptly and are not stuck in our agencies. I am committed to working with you in our fight for affordable and accessible quality child care throughout New York.”

Sen. Tim Kennedy, chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, said, “As we continue to grapple with the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and look towards building back better, ensuring equitable access to childcare is an essential component of our path towards recovery. For years, we’ve been fighting to expand resources for working families, and with the unprecedented challenges underscored by the pandemic, our mission is now more important than ever. We must prioritize New York families and child care providers as we plan for a safe and sustainable future.”

Assembly Member Michaelle C. Solages, Chair of the NYS Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus, said, “We know just how vital child care is to the recovery process of our state. No longer can we continue to delay investing in this necessary sector of our economy. Our workforce has seen a decline as parents, disproportionately women, struggle to maintain a healthy balance between their work and home lives due to the strain the ongoing pandemic has put on the childcare system. Consequently, a child care crisis is an understatement. Now is the time for New York State to be proactive and empower parents to provide for and protect their families. I echo the calls of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care and their partners in calling for a transformative child care plan that provides relief funding and helps to rebuild the industry. The time to act is now.”

Assemblymember Monica Wallace, said, COVID crisis has laid bare the systemic inequalities facing working mothers. During the first six months of the pandemic, mothers of young children lost work at three times the rate of fathers of young kids. If we don’t adequately fund childcare

now, we could lose decades of progress made by women in joining and advancing in the labor force.”

Senator Alessandra Biaggi said, “Child care has always been essential, and in the wake of COVID-19 has become a real lifeline for working families, said Senator Alessandra Biaggi. “Access to affordable child care is key for women — especially women of color and low-income women — to be able to participate in the labor force. In order to rebuild an equitable economy, we must expand access to affordable child care services by investing in the workers and infrastructure behind it. I extend my deepest gratitude to the child care providers serving the Bronx and Westchester and will continue to fight for the resources you deserve.”

Andre Farrell, owner of the Katmint Learning Initiative in Brooklyn, is a provider who has found it almost impossible to get the assistance he needs to keep his facility open and available to essential workers. “I ask for more state funding because we need to simply ‘Put Childcare First’. We ask for \$500 million this year, not as a means to an end, but rather a commitment to begin building a more sustainable and stronger early childcare system,” he said.

Dr. Kimberly Townsend is the President and CEO of Loretto, a company that operates long term facilities in Central New York. Many of her employees depend on affordable access to child care. “Lack of access to affordable, flexible child care will continue to be a barrier to getting out of poverty until we rethink the system, and make the investments being proposed today. I support the recommendations this group is making to improve access and affordability for low-income families so we can continue to promote a path to prosperity for the parents in our community who need safe, dependable care in order to work every day.”

Sherrill Phillips, a Buffalo parent who also works at a child care center, explained how difficult it is for her to increase her income or even do her job well, without jeopardizing her state subsidy assistance. “Currently I have 3 children in daycare receiving daycare subsidies. For me, I wouldn't be able to maintain my job without the assistance of daycare. Daycare subsidies make my weekly costs somewhat affordable. The government wants families to work, However, whenever there's an increase in pay or you want to take advantage of overtime; there goes your subsidy. I'm trying to be there for my job when they need me, however, I run the risk of losing my subsidy if I work too many hours. There needs to be a balance for the working class.”

Many statewide professional and advocacy groups that have not historically focused on child care, spoke about why they have decided now to join in the campaign to Save NY Child Care.

United University Professionals (UUP) President Dr. Frederick E. Kowal, said, “New York State families need a state budget that invests in child care, paid leave for all and policies that value our families. UUP has been a strong, longtime supporter of paid family leave and child care initiatives. During this pandemic our members, especially those at the SUNY hospitals, have experienced firsthand the difficulty of balancing the immense responsibilities of their jobs and caring for our communities, with the need to find adequate, quality care for their children. We believe all families should have access to quality and affordable childcare and that is why we are calling on the state to provide the funds necessary to stabilize, reform, and rebuild a child care system that serves all New York families.”

Marina Marcou-O'Malley, policy and operations director with the Alliance for Quality Education, a statewide advocacy group that has organized major campaigns around public school and pre-K funding: “For far too long New York State's investment in early education and in our youngest New Yorkers has been lackluster at best. The pandemic did not create the

inequities we see today, but it did illuminate them. It is up to Governor Cuomo and our legislature to address these inequities and walk the walk, not just talk the talk, and invest in early education, in the Black and Brown women who make up the workforce, the children and families that are truly the future of our state. The state must do its share and not only invest the federal dollars we received, but also raise revenues, implement the Invest in Our New York Act to invest in early care and education.”

Robin Chappelle Golston, President and CEO of Planned Parenthood Empire State Acts said "One of the cornerstones of reproductive justice is the ability to raise our children under safe and sustainable conditions, and accessible child care is fundamental to that idea. Quality child care is essential to achieving financial stability for working families, yet for many New Yorkers it is out of reach. The pandemic has posed even greater challenges to consuming and providing child care, especially within marginalized communities and communities of color. As women are currently being driven out of the workforce at alarming rates, an investment for New York’s children and families is needed to ensure that recovery is possible.”

Donna Lieberman, Executive Director of the NYCLU, said, “The pandemic has brought into stark focus that New York’s childcare system is broken – it is built on framework that devalues caregiving and caregivers, serving neither children, working families nor the hardworking people – overwhelmingly women, particularly women of color and immigrants, who provide this essential care. If New York Forward means anything, it must include a fully and fairly funded quality childcare system that is accessible to all. NYCLU and its members are proud to support the Empire State Childcare Campaign and the Save New York Child Care Campaign, calling on Albany lawmakers and the Governor to reimagine childcare and make universal access to quality child care a top priority. New York’s future leaders deserve nothing less.”