

April 2024: Top Child Care Priorities for NYS Budget

In order for the historic child care assistance expansions to be successful, *New York leaders must create a permanent, substantial compensation fund for the child care workforce in this year's state budget. They must also address barriers that have disproportionately kept low-income, immigrant, and Black and brown New York families from accessing child care assistance*, including the state's long-standing and inequitable rule of tying child care assistance to a caregivers' exact hours of work.

- **Adopt the Senate and the Assembly one-house budget proposals to include \$220 million in additional funds for the child care workforce**, bringing the total investment in the workforce to \$500 million. This falls short of what the child care sector needs, but is an important investment.
- **Add language to make the workforce compensation funding permanent.** The Senate resolution indicates an intention to make the investment in the workforce ongoing. Providers cannot recruit or retain educators with one-time bonuses, and the field cannot begin to create a pipeline of new members to the workforce without the promise of ongoing funding.
- **Adopt the proposal included in both houses' budgets (but not the Executive budget) to ensure that the many parents who work variable hours in retail, the trades, the gig economy, and restaurants can access child care by ending the state's practice of tying child care assistance to caregivers' exact hours of work (decoupling).** Legislation to end this practice has been passed by the Legislature twice, most recently in December 2023, when it was vetoed with the message that it was an issue that needed to be addressed by the Legislature in the budget. We urge and expect that the final budget will once and for all end this inequitable practice that leaves many of the State's essential workers from being able to access child care assistance.
- **Adopt the proposal included in both houses' budgets (but not the Executive budget) to increase the rate paid to child care providers for serving families experiencing homelessness, and families that need care during non-traditional hours**, with a preference for the **Assembly budget proposal** requiring all counties to set the rate at a 15% differential.
- **Adopt the Senate's proposal to expand the pilot projects commenced last year to provide scholarships to families needing child care who are ineligible for the statewide child care assistance program due to the child's immigration status, or the episodic nature of the parents' work schedule.**
- **Adopt the Assembly's Article VII proposal directing OCFS to "utilize a cost estimation model** to determine the actual cost providers incur when providing child care" in setting subsidy rates for child care assistance, and its proposed investment of \$250,000 to cover costs.