

## PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Katie Albitz, [kalbitz@scaany.org](mailto:kalbitz@scaany.org), 518-463-1896 Ext 132

## **400 Rally at New York State Capitol For Urgently-Needed Investment in the Child Care Workforce and Systems Improvements Necessary to Make Child Care Eligibility Expansions a Reality**

Albany, NY (February 6, 2024) – This afternoon, 400 child care educators, parents, union members, and advocates took part in the Empire State Campaign for Child Care’s annual Child Care Advocacy Day at the New York State Capitol. They were joined by New York State lawmakers for a rally where speakers called for urgent investment in the state’s child care system in this year’s budget.

The event featured passionate remarks from parents, child care workers, employers, and elected leaders from across New York State. Both parents and child care providers shared the burden of not being able to provide for their families because chronic underinvestment in the child care system means care costs too much for families, while child care providers themselves earn too little to pay their bills and keep their doors open.

Their stories emphasized the need to fund policies that will build towards the creation of universal child care in New York, which advocates say will provide high quality child care with flexibility for families and good wages for the child care workforce.

The top priority for the Empire State Campaign for Care this session is the creation of a permanent \$1.2 billion Child Care Workforce Compensation Fund to provide all child care workers who work in licensed, regulated programs compensation parity with similar positions in the public school system.

In addition to this compensation fund, advocates called for supportive policy changes to meet the needs of more families. These changes include investments to meet the needs more families by: expanding care in evening, weekend, and overnight hours; ensuring better pay rates for the care of children with disabilities and developmental needs; allowing the inclusion of all children regardless of their immigration status; and eliminating the requirement for families to earn minimum wage to receive child care assistance.

[Initial B-Roll here – more to come after 6 pm](#)

[Photos here – more to come after 6pm](#)

[For our full policy priorities, click here.](#)

“From Long Island to the Bronx to the North Country, we see headlines every week saying that families are struggling to afford life in New York State. Child care is one of the biggest expenses for most families, and eligibility expansions alone are not enough to help them find and afford care that meets their needs,” said **Shoshana Hershkowitz, Campaign Manager of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care**, “That’s why we’re calling on the State Legislature to invest \$1.2B directly in pay for the child care workforce – because we know that there cannot be enough child care for every family without competitive, thriving wages for child care educators. We’re also prioritizing policies that will break down barriers and build up supply for families who need care most. Every year our advocacy day grows because New Yorkers believe in our urgent vision for a state where every family has the care they need, every child has a strong start, and every child care educator is valued for their important work.”

"Governor Hochul pretending that she’s adequately addressed the child care crisis is like throwing a sponge at a bursting dam, then taking a bow and walking away. Child care experts and everyone facing this issue on the ground have been incredibly clear: this crisis cannot be resolved without swift, comprehensive change. We need universal child care with higher wages for child care workers, and we cannot afford to wait." – **Senator Jabari Brisport, Chair, Children and Families Committee**

"Despite the massive headway we have made, thousands of families are still deprived of care because of arbitrary restrictions, child care workers remain outrageously under compensated, and New York has yet to make the most of billions of dollars in investments – with workforce and families now paying the price," said **Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi, Chair of the Children and Families Committee**. "We can't succeed collectively unless every child and every family is allowed to grow and thrive – and although child care workers have proved they will excel through any adversity, it's time we end the negligent and frankly unconscionable overlooking of these essential workers in this budget cycle."

“There has never been a more urgent need to pass universal childcare. Parents increasingly have to make the financially difficult decision to stay home from work to care for their child or pay rising childcare costs. As a mother, I will continue to fight for a truly universal child care program in New York State,” said **Assemblymember Michaelle C. Solages, Chair, Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, & Asian Legislative Caucus**

“New York State has a mandate to cut child poverty in half over the next ten years. Universal childcare is a foundational part of the infrastructure of a just and equitable society. It’s as essential as roads and bridges. I’m as committed as ever to our state’s efforts to ensure every family has a safe and enriching space for their child, and every child care worker has a dignified wage worthy of what they contribute to our society,” – **Senator Jessica Ramos, Chair of Committee on Labor**

“Child care workers are some of the most essential workers in our economy, with millions of New York families depending on them daily, yet for too long the meaningful contributions they bring to our economy has gone unrecognized. This has caused a crisis for families as they

struggle to access child care. We must do more to support the challenging and important work of child care providers. I am proud to stand with my Labor partners, the Schuyler Center, and government colleagues to urge the Governor to make the child care workforce a priority in this year's Executive budget." – **Assemblymember Harry B. Bronon, Assembly Chair of Labor**

"Increased pay for child care workers is key to decreasing workforce turnover, which in turn provides more stability for children, who thrive with continuity," **said Assemblywoman Amy Paulin, Chair, Committee on Health.** "Child care also allows our families to go to work and contributes to New York's economic health. I thank the Empire State Campaign for Child Care for rallying for child care workers and New York's children."

"More than 28,000 families in New York lack the childcare they need because of understaffing at providers," **said Assemblymember Patricia Fahy, Chair of Committee on Higher Education.** "We made significant investments in last year's budget to address New York's childcare crisis, and now we must continue that progress and boost the wages of workers, address staffing shortages, and ultimately establish a universal childcare system where no family in New York is left behind. When households and families have access to childcare, they thrive – and the FY2025 budget must include significant investments that make that vision a reality for all New Yorkers."

**Senator Rachel May, Chair of Committee on Cities 2, Chair of Legislative Commission on Rural Resources said,** "It's nearly impossible for many families in Central New York to find affordable and consistent child care. That's one of the main barriers to full employment for many working families, especially women. Affordable and quality child care ensures that parents can support their families, boosts the local economy, and provides jobs. And many child care workers leave the industry because of the low pay, which is a slap in the face for the workers who provide this critical service.. Let's guarantee childcare services for all New York parents by passing commonsense legislation like raising the pay for childcare workers."

"Staffing shortages, low wages, and cumbersome administrative hurdles are some of the main drivers behind the child care crisis in our state. As Ranking Member on the Children and Families Committee, I am committed to fighting for parents seeking relief from the high cost of child care and a system that no longer works for them. Providing quality child care for New Yorkers who need it shouldn't be a political issue. I am committed to working with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to fix New York's broken system and deliver the investments our families deserve." – **Senator Rob Rolison (39th District), Ranking Member on the Children and Families Committee**

**Assemblywoman Sarah Clark said,** "New York state has long under-invested in child care, despite the system continuing to crumble and put unfathomable strains on families and providers right before our eyes. This disparity continues despite a functional child care ecosystem being crucial to a vibrant economy and workforce, while also a needed step towards ending child poverty- with New York cities having among the highest rates in the country. We have made small but mighty steps towards fixing this broken system in recent years, but families

can't wait. New York state must take bold action and make significant investments into child care if we're to avoid the system collapsing any further. We must remove remaining harmful barriers that keep families who are struggling the most from getting the support they need. We must come to the aid of remaining providers who are holding on by a thread because families cannot afford to pay more and workers leave because they can't make a living wage. As a mom of three, I am fighting to ensure the state finally makes child care work for all, that funding is significant and sustainable, so that our families and providers can thrive instead of merely survive."

"The struggle for childcare has become a national headline as parents face systemic obstacles in raising healthy families. As I fight for universal child care legislation in New York City, it is clear that we will need help and support from all levels of government. I'm thankful for the advocates and caregivers who have been fighting for this cause for decades before me, and I'm honored to join them in Albany today," **said NYC Council Member Jennifer Gutiérrez.**

"As an immigrant worker in the restaurant industry, I know firsthand the challenges of balancing work and family responsibilities. Universal child care is not just a necessity for us; it's a lifeline that ensures our children receive the care and support they deserve while we strive to build better futures for our families and communities." – **Erika Salvatierra, Co-Chair of the ROC-NY's Childcare Committee**

"Child care in New York is a broken market," **according to Pete Nabozny, Policy Director at The Children's Agenda.** "Parents can't afford to pay more and providers can't afford to charge less. Even with the high cost of care, providers are among the lowest paid workers in our state despite providing one of the most valuable and important services. New York must move toward an equitable system of high quality, affordable care. That begins with creating a permanent fund to increase child care worker compensation that is robustly resourced and sets early childhood education on par with public education. We have the resources for child care to be abundantly available and even more rewarding for providers. All we need is the political will."

"Governor Hochul's proposed budget fails to invest in the childcare workforce, jeopardizing the progress made in providing access to child care programs and assistance to families. It's unacceptable and deeply disappointing to witness actions that don't align with rhetoric and contradict the state's recent positive strides. We urge the legislature to stand up for working families and children by investing in child care," **said Interim Co-Executive Director, Marina Marcou-O'Malley, Alliance for Quality Education.**

"Child care is essential and PROFESSIONAL work that not just anyone can do. We need thriving wages to retain our workforce and keep our doors open," **said Vonetta Rhodes on behalf of Western NY Child Care Action Team.**

"New York State has made impressive progress in terms of increasing families' access to child care. Unfortunately, it does not include all families. We must extend coverage to children regardless of immigration status, create more infant/toddler seats, and decouple child care

assistance from a parents' hours of work," **said Jenn O'Connor, Director of Partnerships and Early Childhood Policy for The Education Trust–New York and coalition lead for Raising NY.** "New York State's gains will not succeed without a permanent investment in the workforce. We must uplift child care educators/providers, the majority of whom are Black and Brown women by increasing their current pay while we work with the State to move away from the market rate to a system that compensates the true cost of providing care."

"Caregiving is essential, professional, demanding work that helps support every other aspect of our economy—and it is the responsibility of our entire state and nation to reject the racism and sexism that have perpetuated an unjust system that benefits the few over the many," **said Blue Carreker, Vice President, Programming and Advocacy, PowHer NY,** "It doesn't matter if we make child care more affordable for parents, if we don't have enough quality educators and providers to accept their children. And without a pay rate that is parallel to what educators make in Pre-K or public school programs, center providers will not be able to recruit and retain the staff they need; and family care providers will continue to close their doors."

"If the workforce participation rate of mothers with children younger than 6 years old (66%) increased to that of women with school-age children (76%), approximately one million more workers would be in the labor force today (Wells Fargo 2022)," **said Sheri Scavone, CEO, WNY Women's Foundation** "Women's workforce participation is directly impacted by childcare responsibilities, and the lack of childcare availability. Until we pay those who are providing critical care and education for our children a thriving wage, the child care shortage will continue to hold back women's participation in the workforce."

Moms in New York are struggling as our state's child care crisis continues, and looking to state lawmakers for solutions," **said Diana Limongi, Early Learning Campaign Director at MomsRising.** "We need a \$1.2 billion direct investment in the child care workforce, a permanent state child care fund to make wages and benefits for the early learning workforce competitive, increased rates for legally exempt providers, and an end to the harmful, discriminatory practice of denying child care assistance to families based on their immigration status. The Empire State Campaign for Child Care's policy priorities will strengthen our state's economy, help solve our labor shortage by making it possible for moms and caregivers to hold jobs, and boost businesses and families. Moms want lawmakers to act now."

"Family child care programs offer an intimate setting for children to explore, build strong relationships, and develop skills that will remain with them for the rest of their lives," **said Steven Morales, NY Policy Director of All Our Kin.** "If our state continues to lose these essential educators to other professions, we will be putting the healthy development of our children at risk. All Our Kin joins the call for our New York State elected officials to permanently invest in the child care workforce now."

"Investing in accessible and affordable childcare for all is not just an economic imperative; it's a societal commitment to the well-being of our families and the future of our children," **said Rebecca Garrard, Deputy Director of Campaigns and Movement Politics at Citizen Action**

**of New York.** “Simultaneously, we need to respect those who provide child care as the skilled workers they are and ensure they have good wages and benefits. When all of our children have access to excellent child care — that supports their cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development — our communities are stronger, healthier, safer, and more prosperous.”

“The Adirondacks, like many rural areas of New York, rely on accessible and affordable high quality child care to support our workforce and economy. The Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance at Adirondack Foundation is proud to be a part of this event to encourage systemic change that will support the child care workforce into the future.” – **Kate Ryan, Director Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance at Adirondack Foundation**

“With a deep commitment to and significant impact in the early care and education sector for 25 years, LIIF is steadfast in its support of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care’s ask for permanent state investment in this industry’s long-underpaid workforce,” **said Angie Garling, Senior Vice President for Early Care and Education at the Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF).** “As our organization looks to scale our work in this state, we will work alongside our partners to ensure all of New York’s children and families have access to affordable, high-quality home- and center-based ECE.”

“Investing in childcare is not just a matter of economics; it’s a matter of equity and justice. Ensuring equitable access to childcare is essential for the well-being of our communities. Discriminatory practices based on immigration status or inconsistent work schedules only exacerbate existing inequalities. By implementing inclusive policies, policy leaders are not just bolstering our economy; they cultivate a more just and prosperous society for all. Help Ensure All New Yorkers Can Access Child Care!” – **Brittani Williams, Director of Advocacy Policy and Research, Generation Hope**