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Empire State Campaign for Child Care Responds to State of the State Address

ALBANY, N.Y. (January 10, 2023) — In response to Governor Kathy Hochul’s 2023 State of the State address, the Empire State Campaign for Child Care (ESCCC) released the following statement:

Governor Hochul made history as the first female Governor of New York State. In addition to this impressive title is another, equally as important: that of mother and grandmother. For the first time, New York State has an Executive who understands the pressures of the balancing act parents in general – and women in particular – face.

We were encouraged by the Governor’s inclusion of child care as one of her top priorities. It was particularly important that the Governor repeated her commitment to investing \$7 billion over four years in order to create universal access to child care in New York State – and that she identified a robust and healthy child care system as essential not just to children and families, but to the State’s economy. She has provided the State with opportunities on which to build.

We strongly support her further identification of child care workforce compensation as a key priority. Specifically, the following proposals from the Governor address some of the most urgent issues concerning family access and the workforce:

- ***Increasing accessibility of systems for families*** by streamlining and centralizing the subsidy application process and instituting automatic income eligibility when enrolled in other forms of public assistance (WIC, SNAP, etc.). As the Governor acknowledged in her State of State address, the State’s child care assistance program has long been structured to discourage robust participation. The Governor committed to working toward a system that works for the families it has been created to serve.
- ***Capping co-pays at 1%*** of family income over the federal poverty level (FPL).

- **Raising eligibility** by increasing the income limit to the maximum allowed by federal law, to cover families earning up to 85% of state median income (SMI).
- **Recognizing the child care workforce is ‘indispensable’** by co-locating a business navigator in each of the 10 Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs).
- **Addressing affordability for certain families** by piloting the NYS Employer Supported Child Care Program, where costs of care would be split between the state, employers, and employees.
- **Addressing the needs of the workforce** by providing payments to staff and sign-on bonuses for new employees.

We have the following **recommendations**:

- Regarding the business navigator proposal, we urge the State to fund and hire business-savvy staff and co-locate these navigators within the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs), a step above merely “leveraging” their role in the community.
- Regarding the child care workforce, which is grossly understaffed and underpaid: the Campaign asserts that sign-on bonuses and payments to staff should begin as soon as possible, no later than the first half of this year, and must only be the *start* of a more robust plan for increasing compensation in a significant and sustained way – one that includes wage supplements, to support and sustain a workforce caring for our youngest New Yorkers.

We were discouraged that the Governor made no mention today of expanding child care coverage to undocumented children and families, or of the long overdue development of a new tool for determining provider reimbursement levels based on the true cost of care. Finally, we look forward to working with legislators and the Governor to truly address decoupling of parent work hours and child care coverage – a reform that will advance the Governor’s stated goal of removing unnecessary barriers that are preventing too many eligible parents from accessing child care assistance.

We urge consideration of the recommendations put forth by the Campaign based on the needs and concerns of providers and families all across the State. The Governor’s proposals in the State of the State represent a strong start. We look forward to additional details on the proposals in the Executive Budget later this month and to working with the Governor and the Legislature to ensure that New York’s child care system meets the needs of every child, family, and provider in New York State.

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