



Staffing Shortages Due to Low Wages Are Driving the Child Care Crisis in New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ALBANY, N.Y. – **More than 28,000 families across New York State are going without the child care they need because of understaffing** according to preliminary analysis of a [survey reaching over 1,600 child care programs statewide](#).

The survey, conducted by the advocacy group [Empire State Campaign for Child Care](#), reached approximately 10% of licensed and registered child care programs statewide, with many responses providing data for more than one program. It found 3,857 unfilled positions including qualified lead teachers, in-home child care assistants, substitutes, and paraprofessionals to support children with disabilities.

The survey found that 90% of child care centers are currently experiencing a staffing shortage – defined as one or more staff roles that are currently unfilled. As a result, over 750 classrooms in the respondents' child care centers and afterschool programs are dark, serving no children at all despite being part of existing programs.

“This survey begins to put a number to what we have known for a long time: expanded eligibility for families is an empty promise without direct, sustained state investment in the pay of child care educators,” said **Katie Albitz, a policy and communications specialist at the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy**.

Many respondents expressed their gratitude for previous stabilization and child care desert grants the state has provided, but underscore the urgent need for permanent investment directly in the wages of the child care workforce, which earns less than 97% of occupations statewide [according to analysis by The Children's Agenda](#).

“While the extra support for opening centers and increasing capacity is wonderful, it does not address the staffing shortage and extremely low wages that child care providers receive,” said **Kristy Wales, Director of Education at the Discovery Center of the Southern Tier in Binghamton**, “You cannot make more child care slots without addressing the staffing shortage.”

These staffing shortages are hitting supply where families need it the most, worsening the shortage of infant and toddler care across the state. **70% of respondents who provide in-home child care reported that they could take additional infants and toddlers if fully staffed.**

Staffing shortages have ripple effects that extend beyond fewer slots for families. In fact, 67% of programs experiencing a shortage report temporarily reducing capacity, closing classrooms, or closing their programs completely on short notice due to staff absences, leaving families to scramble for last minute care or miss work.

It also means that when staff are absent and no substitutes can be found, administrators spend their days in the classroom and their nights doing paperwork.

“As the director, I have to work ten to twelve hours a day so I can do my administrative work and cover in classrooms,” said **Patricia Pool, Director of Medical Center Nursery School in Manhattan**, “The associate

director also covers in classrooms so we remain in ratio and then completes her admin work remotely at night.”

The Empire State Campaign for Child Care continues to call for a \$1.2 billion investment in the compensation and benefits of the child care workforce in this year’s budget, allowing for a bonus of \$12,500 per child care provider to be paid until a permanent, fully-funded wage scale can be implemented.

In the recent one-house budget proposals, the New York State Senate calls to add an additional \$500 million to Governor Hochul’s proposed workforce funding, for a total of \$889 million.

“Something is seriously wrong with the system when our own child care staff do not earn a livable wage; cannot afford child care for their own children while they are providing care and education to others’ children; cannot afford to take advantage of health care benefits because they don’t make enough money and therefore have to apply for Medicaid,” **said Ann Marie Stephan, Executive Director of Rochester Childfirst Network** “Let’s stop talking about and lamenting how it is wrong. Now is the time – take action to fix it.”

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