

For Immediate Release

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## **Empire State Campaign for Child Care Response to the State of the State**

Albany, N.Y. (January 9, 2024) – **New York’s families need universal child care now more than ever – to provide for themselves, to keep roots in the communities they call home, and to realize their dreams.** They have a right to a flourishing system that is shaped not only by the needs of working parents and their employers, but those of thriving, healthy children. They need a government that treats families who apply for assistance the same as any family applying for public school, rather than looking through a lens of skepticism and expecting them to navigate a maze of bureaucratic hurdles. They need state leaders that honor the challenging and important work of caring for and educating our youngest children by recognizing that it should not be a minimum wage job, and who take up the urgent work of securing the funding to pay them a thriving wage.

In a time when families are struggling to keep up with the cost of living and many are forced to leave the state because of it, New York has the opportunity – and the responsibility – to make good on the promise of its eligibility expansions in this year's budget. Accepting the new status quo as good enough would be a tremendous mistake. That is why the Empire State Campaign for Child Care is calling for [priorities](#) that will build up New York’s child care through **meaningful, permanent state investment in the child care workforce and important system changes to ensure that every income-eligible family gets the care they need** – including care outside of traditional 9-5 weekday hours, before and after school, for children who have newly arrived in New York seeking asylum with their families, and extra supports for children with disabilities.

**Unfortunately, Governor Hochul’s policy priorities outlined in the State of the State do not rise to the occasion.** Child care programs cannot build their budgets on temporary, diminishing grants, as they’ve been expected to do year after year since the pandemic began, but today Governor Hochul proposed yet another one-time grant for the workforce. Programs cannot recruit or retain qualified staff or compensate them adequately to ensure continuity of quality learning when parent tuition and state reimbursement keep their wages constrained to minimum wage. They cannot continue to serve the communities that depend on them when the state routinely fails to fund programs sufficiently to keep their doors open. And while many will succeed, most child care programs will struggle to provide the consistent, high-quality care and education they know is critical to child development with constant staff turnover. Disappointingly, the Governor did not mention her support for the [recently vetoed decoupling bill](#) in her statement – there is still time for her to include this commonsense policy supported by a bipartisan majority in her Executive Budget.

We look forward to learning more about the Governor’s proposed Family Child Care Network pilot program, investment to expand early childhood mental health consultations, and enhanced quality reimbursement. **However, we assert that high-quality child care cannot be achieved without investments that sustain stable, quality relationships between children and their educators and**

**caregivers.** Without a path to pay that rewards both experience and education and provides a lifetime of security for educators – with benefits like health care and retirement – child care educators will continue to go hungry, keep their programs afloat with personal credit cards, and ultimately leave work they love when they can no longer scrape by.

We look now to the State Legislature for visionary leadership and investment in child care in this year's State Budget.