



2023 Brought Progress for NYS Child Care Amidst Missed Opportunities, Sustained State Investment in the Child Care Workforce Must be the Next Priority

A session that started with promise and big ideas to address the needs of New York's youngest children, their families, and the child care workforce ended with bright spots for child care, amidst missed opportunities and incomplete solutions.

This year, the Empire State Campaign for Child Care sought to take New York further down the path to universal child care by: addressing the critical child care workforce shortage, equitably extending child care assistance eligibility to more families, and removing unnecessary barriers that prevent many eligible families from receiving the supports they need to thrive. Thanks to the hard work of passionate child care advocates, tireless legislative champions, and Governor Hochul's recognition that this year was the time to break down barriers faced by families who try to access child care, New York made important progress in all three areas.

Notable wins aligning with our advocacy priorities include:

- A \$500M workforce compensation fund to mitigate the child care workforce shortage with bonuses to increase retention and recruit new workers to the field
- The passage of corrected legislation to decouple the hours of care a child can receive from their parents' working hours
- A small pilot program to support the inclusion of children who are currently excluded from child care assistance due to their immigration status
- Expanded eligibility to the maximum allowable for federal funds (85% of state median income (SMI)), or \$83,370 for a family of three, as of October 1
- Promise of the creation of an online application for child care assistance along with other system modernizations

We thank Governor Hochul for setting the tone with this year's State of the State that New York must begin to break down barriers that prevent too many families from receiving the care they need to thrive; Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins for her steadfast prioritization of child care as a central issue of the State Senate, and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie for his recognition that child care is an urgent priority that disproportionately impacts New York's working mothers.

We extend our deep gratitude to Senate Children and Families Chair Jabari Brisport and Assembly Children and Families Chair Andrew Hevesi for their constant leadership, authentic

partnership, and unwavering commitment to New York's children and families. We thank Assemblywoman Michaelle Solages and the New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus for including child care workforce compensation as one of their top priorities for this budget session; Senators Jessica Ramos and Samra Brouk, Assemblymembers Sarah Clark, Catalina Cruz, and Jen Lunsford for their leadership on key legislation this session. We thank the New York State Legislature for once again overwhelmingly voting in favor of legislation that will allow parents the freedom to meet their families' needs by accessing child care that is not strictly tied to the hours they are working. We also appreciate Senate Children and Families Ranking Member Rob Rolison for his thoughtful presence and determination to better understand the issues facing New York's child care system in January's child care hearing.

We look forward to Governor Hochul's swift signature on the revised version of the decoupling bill which will this time do what was intended last year: break down barriers for families, including barriers to receiving the care they need on the terms that work best for their schedules. In addition to the needs of parents and child care educators, we hope that implementation truly centers the needs of children and their development first and foremost – promoting continuity of care; consistent, predictable schedules; and access to early education opportunities all young children deserve.

We also look forward to continuing to walk together down the path to universal child care, building on the strong foundations already laid. Sustained state investment in the child care workforce must be the next priority, made all the more urgent by the end of federal stabilization funds.

We need look no further than our neighbors in Canada for a cautionary tale of how even a visionary plan for universal child care can falter if unaccompanied by significant and sustained increases in compensation for the child care workforce. That has been the case in Canadian provinces such as [Ontario](#) as they begin to implement the federal \$10-a-day child care plan, and has led to long waiting lists and frustrated parents who cannot access the child care they were promised. [Our survey](#) illustrating the extent of child care staffing shortages in New York's programs – including staffing shortages in 90% of child care centers – demonstrated that the same is true in New York. The only path to building enough child care supply for families in New York is through permanent investment in a thriving wage and benefits for the child care workforce. **Whatever the future holds for New York's economy, the only way we will ever have enough child care for every family that needs it is by investing state funds directly, significantly, and permanently in this workforce. That must begin next year.**

The high quality early care and education New York's children deserve is in reach, as long as we are willing to fund it. In addition to paying child care educators a worthy, family-sustaining wage, New York must move away from the market rate funding mechanism and develop a model that funds improvements to physical spaces, allows child care programs to hire the support staff children in their care need to thrive, and ensures that early childhood educators receive healthcare and a dignified retirement. This model — a true cost of care model — must

also recognize the costs associated with the specialized work of caring for children with disabilities and the expenses of providing overnight and weekend care for the many families employed in essential sectors such as healthcare, first response, food service, and hospitality that operate at nontraditional hours.

Every family in New York should be able to find the care that meets their cultural, geographic, educational, linguistic, and scheduling needs. As we work to build up supply, we must continue extending eligibility to every child and family in the state, just like public school, with no immigration, work, or income requirements.

Our youngest children deserve their first experiences to be with passionate early educators who are not worried about keeping a roof over their heads and keeping their doors open. Our school age children and their families need safe, nurturing, educational programs outside of school hours. Our families deserve the peace of mind that child care educators they trust – that often grow to be extensions of their own families – will be there when they need them most. **The promise of universal child care is the promise that New York will be there for families, no matter what.** But this promise can only be achieved through bold action and steadfast commitment from New York State’s leaders.

We look forward to walking this path together as we prepare for the 2024 legislative session.

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“We are grateful to our New York leaders for again prioritizing investments and innovations in child care in the 2023-24 legislative session, expanding eligibility for child care assistance to an estimated 113,000 children by increasing the income eligibility to \$93,500; reducing co-pays for tens of thousands of families; making changes to make eligibility and assistance work better and more quickly for families; offering small bonuses to the essential child care workforce; and implementing a small pilot program to provide child care assistance to children currently denied assistance due to immigration status. These are important, historic wins,” **said Dede Hill, Policy Director for the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy.** “However, without further action, these wins could prove meaningless for most families if we do not act with urgency to solve the child care workforce crisis. We look forward to working together– state leaders and child care providers, parents and advocates – to create a long-term plan to build, sustain, and retain a well-paid, well-supported child care workforce to meet the growing need for child care for all the state’s children. “

"While New York continues to move in the right direction on child care, we must start moving at a faster pace to address the critical needs of child care educators and families in our state. The removal of some barriers to accessing assistance will provide enormous and immediate relief for many families. However, without sustainable and long term investment in the workforce, families will not be able to find a program. Our goal remains a system of truly universal child care. We will keep fighting for a greater commitment in the future to supporting the people — a majority of them women, and women of color — who are caring for our youngest New Yorkers every day,"

said Marina Marcou-O'Malley, Operations and Policy Director, Alliance for Quality Education.

"Family Child Care Providers do not feel confident that continued stabilization funds are enough to retain their Assistants. Providers fear this epidemic of financial stress will force more of them to close their doors. We are asking that funding child care fully at the true cost of care be a priority to New York State. When we fund educators well for their work and offer much deserved incentives and opportunities to excel in their offerings of quality care, we provide brighter futures for all children." – **Shanita Bowen, Chief Operating Office, ECE On The Move**

"Our progress on child care proves the Chinese proverb that 'a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step'," **said Larry Marx, CEO of The Children's Agenda.** "Each state budget and every legislative session is New York's opportunity to lead the nation in ensuring universal, affordable, high quality child care for all our children and families. While we've taken some encouraging baby steps in the right direction by supporting our caring workforce and expanding eligibility for assistance, families still demand greater, bolder strides to reach our destination. We are grateful to the Governor and legislative leaders for starting us down this path; and we also know that to go far and complete this journey, we need to work together."

"Day Care Council of New York is proud to be a part of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care and of what was achieved in this legislative session to stabilize the early childhood sector. We are excited to work with OCFS and our partners in the Child Care Resource and Referral programs to ensure that providers access the funds allocated to support the workforce. At the same time, we recognize that much more must be done to guarantee a fair and thriving wage for the workforce. We look forward to the work ahead in the fight for salary parity for the early childhood workforce." – **Gregory Brender, Chief Policy and Innovation Officer, Day Care Council of New York, Inc.**

"With each successive budget cycle, state lawmakers are getting us closer to a childcare system that meets the needs of New York families. Last year's historic commitment to investing \$7 billion made child care more affordable for thousands of families. In FY24, our legislative champions continued fulfilling that important promise: capping co-pay costs, expanding voucher eligibility, investing in the child care workforce and advocating to close gaps in the hours care is available," **said Jason Cone, Chief Public Policy and Advocacy Officer at Robin Hood.** "Amidst a statewide affordability crisis and with federal funds to stabilize child care drying up, New York must ultimately drive towards universal child care. This is how we ensure government policy makes a positive long-term impact on the lives of the people it's meant to serve."

"The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF) joins our coalition partners in giving thanks to our legislative champions and recognize the tremendous gains New York State has made towards recognizing the critical value of the child care sector through the recent years. We cannot stop with words of recognition and temporary funding for short term stabilization. New York must center the care economy in any discussion of actualizing a state with thriving families and communities, and a strong economy. The reality is that the care sector and the

amazing people who make it up have been long neglected by state leaders, nearly to the point of collapse, to the detriment of New York's children and families' wellbeing. Now is the time for long-term solutions and commitments to stabilizing, strengthening, and growing this invaluable sector, which is so foundational in the overall strength of our communities. CHCF looks forward to continuing this important work towards UCC with our partners and state leaders." – **Ramon Peguero, Esq., President & CEO of the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF).**

"This year's state budget and legislative sessions resulted in significant steps forward to stabilize the early care and education workforce and improve access to care," **said Jennifer March, Executive Director, Citizens' Committee for Children.** "Extending subsidy eligibility, capping copays, piloting a child care program for undocumented children, and improving the application process for families reflect the commitment of our Governor and State Legislature to strengthening the state's child care system. CCC looks forward to continuing to work with partners in government and the Empire State Campaign for Child Care to build upon the accomplishments secured this year to permanently and sustainably raise wages for the child care workforce and ensure New York State makes greater progress toward a strong and truly universal system of care."

"Bank Street applauds New York State for strengthening investments in our early childhood workforce this year. Until we pay early childhood educators what they deserve we are not going to realize the full potential that early learning offers our children, families, communities and our economy. We look forward to partnering with leaders across our community, and in government, to continue to make bold changes and chart a path towards compensation reform. Other States are doing it. We can too." – **Emily Sharrock, Associate Vice President, Bank Street Education Center**

"The wins in this year's budget and legislative session reflect the tireless work of educators, parents, and advocates to demonstrate that child care is an essential public good," **said Steven Morales, NY Policy Director of All Our Kin.** "As much as we have achieved together, we know true change will only come with long-term investment in a universal child care system that fully supports family child care educators and the parents who rely on them every day. We look forward to deepening our work with partners and lawmakers to bring about transformational change within the next year."

We applaud the efforts of Governor Hochul and both the Senate and the Assembly in recognizing the childcare crisis the state is and continues to endure. However, early childhood educators such as myself recognize that New York is leading in being transformational and because of these efforts more families now qualify for the Child Care Assistance Program. We must acknowledge that without real long term investment in compensation for our educators will lead towards families finally having access to quality childcares with no facilities to send their children to. We will continue advocating for equitable compensation for the important role we play in the lives of our youngest children. – **Janna Rodriguez, Chief Executive Officer in Education Management, The Innovative Daycare Corp.**

“Thank you for your hard work this session. We understand that there is great room for improvement, but we appreciate your dedication towards universal childcare. We look forward to continuing to work with you in the future to address the issues that directly affect our children, finances and mental health.” – **Mansie Meikle, Parent Advocate, ECE on the Move**

“We applaud Governor Hochul and the state legislature for the progress made this year to address the child care workforce shortage, to extend eligibility for child care assistance to more families, and to break down barriers that prevent many eligible families from receiving the supports they need. But we know there is more work to be done to achieve the ultimate goal of universal child care in New York State, and FPWA will continue to work with advocates from across the state to move us closer to this goal. First and foremost, we remain focused on investing in the child care workforce to ensure that all early childhood educators are paid wages that are commensurate with the critical work they do each day.” – **Raysa S. Rodriguez, FPWA Chief Program and Policy Officer**

“The strong support for child care from Governor Hochul, Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Speaker Carl Heastie, Senator Jabari Brisport, Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi and the entire Westchester delegation resulted in significant progress this year, particularly in expanding child care affordability. Here in Westchester, we are excited about what comes next as we work toward universal child care access and permanent compensation for the child care workforce that truly reflects their unique value to our economy, present and future. Let’s continue to build a child care system that makes New York State the very best place for young families to work and thrive.” - **Kathy Halas, Executive Director, Child Care Council of Westchester, Inc.**

“The passage of the new budget is a step in the right direction in helping families and child care providers,” **stated Jeanne Wagner, Executive Director Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam, Inc.** “However, there is still a great deal of work that needs to be done to fix the broken system as a whole. It is our hope that the Governor, elected officials, CCR&Rs, child care providers and their families continue having dialogues that move everyone towards universal child care and continued increases in state funding to improve the much needed living wage for child care providers.”

“Ed Trust—NY applauds the State’s commitment to making child care more available to families this year. Yet, we know that any increase in accessibility must go hand-in-hand with a sustainable well-skilled workforce. Our state leaders must focus on career pathways, higher education, and competitive wages for all child care providers, the majority of whom are women of color. We are optimistic that New York State will take steps this coming year to support recruitment and retention efforts, including moving away from the traditional market rate survey toward a true cost of care model. Ed Trust—NY’s cost estimation model and fiscal mapping for both the child care and home visiting sectors will greatly inform the sector. We look forward to accelerating this work through the Raising NY coalition.” – **Dr. Dia Bryant, ED of The Education Trust—NY, convener of the Raising NY coalition**

“For over a century, settlement houses have provided high quality early childhood education programming in New York. The last few years have underscored the need for bold action to support families and the staff who educate and care for young children. New York State took positive steps this legislative session to compensate the early childhood workforce, ensure that more families can access child care by expanding income limits, and allow families to have care regardless of their working hours. However, more must be done to get us to a true universal child care system in New York State. Thank you to Governor Hochul, the State Senate, and State Assembly for supporting children and families across New York State, and we look forward to the work ahead to get us to universal child care.” – **Nora Moran, Director of Policy and Advocacy, United Neighborhood Houses**

"Jumpstart is proud to support the Empire State Campaign for Child Care's efforts to ensure that all children, regardless of race, zip code, immigration status, or socioeconomic background, enter kindergarten prepared to succeed. In recognizing this year's wins and expressing heartfelt gratitude to our champions, we celebrate the milestones achieved, including the establishment of a \$500M workforce compensation fund, corrected legislation for flexible child care hours, the inclusion of children regardless of immigration status, and expanded eligibility for federal funds. As we look towards a future where high-quality early education is accessible to all, we must invest sustainably in our system's infrastructure. We urge the federal government and New York State to provide sustainable funding to the early care and education workforce as federal stabilization funds come to an end. Let us unite with our broad network of providers, educators, and families to drive towards universal childcare, empowered by the dedication of our collaborative partners and our communities." – **Naila Bolus, CEO of Jumpstart for Young Children**

"Prevent Child Abuse New York is grateful to Governor Hochul and to the NYS Legislature for taking preliminary steps to support the child care workforce and to expand access to programs for families during the 2023 legislative session. Child care is a proven Protective Factor that mitigates early adversity and helps families thrive. High quality programs ensure children can learn and grow, and are a concrete support for parents. Parents need affordable, dependable child care so that they can go to work or school and focus on being the best parents they can be. PCANY urges continued momentum to sustain this investment in the workforce, so care continues to be available, and shares the vision for universal child care in New York State, so that all children and families – regardless of immigration status – are supported." – **Timothy Hathaway, Executive Director, Prevent Child Abuse**

“Child care means business – businesses that serve our community, provide families with income, and support other businesses. In turn, adequately funding child care providers directly impacts the health of our local rural economy. Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance at Adirondack Foundation is grateful for Governor Hochul’s leadership and the Legislature’s commitment to improving access to child care. We look forward to our continued partnership as we celebrate this session’s successes and continue to strive for future improvements.

#ChildcareMeansBusiness” – Kate Ryan, Executive Director of Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance

“We applaud the passionate child care advocates, legislative supporters, and Governor Hochul for their countless efforts to create a path to universal childcare in New York State,” **says Davon Russell, WHEDco’s President.** “Significant progress has been made toward a future where high quality and affordable child care for all who need it, is not just a dream, but a reality. However, as federal stabilization funds near their end, we remind New York State to continue to step up. We hold the power to shape our children's futures, to invest in their development, and to set examples that go beyond short-term fixes and missed opportunities.”

“The Low Income Investment Fund applauds the Governor and legislative leaders for prioritizing child care with investments in the workforce and increasing access for families. We are proud to support the early care and education workforce in NYC and share a passion for pushing ahead policies that compensate teachers for their skills, their education, and their unwavering devotion to serve their communities. LIIF remains steadfast in our commitment to continuing to expand access and investments in this critical sector, one that every single one of us depends on, regardless of if we have kids or not.” – **Amy Shea, Program Manager, Early Care and Education, Low Income Investment Fund**

"While we have seen some important wins this session for child care - decoupling, funding for hiring employees, and more - we have yet to see a meaningful, permanent investment in child care. Family child care providers are especially impacted by this, and especially deserving of an enduring commitment, as they are who carried us through the pandemic and continue to offer vital services to their communities. As things stand, we continue to offer short term, taxable grants that impact providers' eligibility for the government programs they are forced to rely on due to resistance to subsidize them as the truly essential industry that they are." – **Jaime-Jin Lewis, Founder and CEO of Wiggle Room**