



**Testimony of Empire State Campaign for Child Care
Before the New York City Council
Committee on Women and Gender Equity
Honorable Tiffany Caban, Chair
And the Committee on Immigration
Honorable Shahana Hanif, Chair
At the Oversight Hearing on Promise NYC
And Immigrants' Access to Child Care**

June 13th, 2023

The Empire State Campaign for Child Care is a Statewide Campaign fighting for a high-quality, free, equitable and universal child care system that meets the needs of all children and families and pays child care programs the true cost of care with a thriving wage and benefits.

With the creation of Promise NYC, New York City acted where New York State failed to. Promise NYC provides child care assistance to eligible families without discriminating on the basis of the child's documentation status. All New York's children should have access to high-quality early care and education. Promise NYC is an important step in that direction and a meaningful recognition that children should not be excluded from early care and education because of their immigration status.

Empire State Campaign for Child Care urges New York City to restore and baseline Promise NYC at \$20 million.

In the FY 2023 budget, the Mayor and City Council allocated \$10 million to allow for child care assistance to immigrant families, including those whose children are without immigration status. The vouchers were distributed by community-based organizations to safeguard against any immigration issues and reached 600. The program was successful enough that 730 families applied between the program's January launch and March 24th. The need and demand are clearly there, and if we are serious about

ensuring the health and safety of our children and our economy, we must provide access to child care to all children, regardless of immigration status.

New York State must also take action to end the exclusion of children from child care assistance due solely to their immigration status. Among those families left without access to assistance are families lawfully present, along with many of the state's essential workers upon whom New York relied so heavily during the pandemic. Crucially, the recently enacted 2023-24 New York State budget contains a small pilot program to help the families of children who are currently excluded due to their immigration status access child care using state-only funds. These measures will make a tangible difference in the lives of children and families but will reach very few children.

Looking ahead, New York State and New York City should be acting without delay to ensure that immigration status is not a factor in determining eligibility for child care assistance for any New York child. There are a number of ways New York leaders could ensure equitable access for all. Restrictions on the use of federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds for undocumented families do not apply to child care programs that are subject to educational standards, including settings in community-based child care and Pre-kindergarten programs. This exemption has already been broadly applied by at least one other state to ensure broad access to pre-K and child care for that state's children.

New York State and local governments throughout the State should also work to expand state and locally-funded programs like Promise NYC and New York State's pilot programs to ensure no otherwise eligible child is excluded from child care solely due to immigration status.

The Empire State Campaign for Child Care urges New York leaders to act swiftly and boldly to ensure that all the state's children have equitable access to high-quality child care without regard to immigration status.