

May 28, 2021

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Senate Majority Leader
Legislative Office Building, Room 907
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable Carl Heastie
Assembly Speaker
Legislative Office Building, Room 932
Albany, NY 12248



Re: Legislative Priorities to Transform NY Child Care

Dear Governor Cuomo, Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Speaker Heastie:

We write today as advocates, child care providers, child care resource and referral agencies, and parents on behalf of New York children and families, and the child care providers that serve them. New York finds itself with a once-in-a-generation opportunity. We have a data-driven, fully vetted plan for transforming New York's child care system just released by the Governor's Child Care Availability Task Force and \$2.4 billion in additional child care stimulus funds to jump-start implementation. At the same time, the challenges facing the child care sector and families as the impacts of the pandemic continue cannot be overstated.

Thank you for passing a 2021-2022 New York Budget that will, effectively implemented, significantly improve access to high-quality, low-cost early childhood education programs and ensure the health and safety of New York children, their families, and the hardworking and committed staff that have continued to provide child care throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and begin to strengthen and transform New York's battered child care system.

More action, however, is needed, to enable New York to make the best, most effective use of these federal – and state – funds. Most significantly, localities need additional flexibility to serve more children and to reduce the burdens on families that too often keep them from accessing child care.

We are asking New York to pass the following package of legislation – this session – to set up New York child care, and New York families, to thrive. Chief among the actions needed, New York must provide local social services districts, including New York City, additional flexibility to serve more children and ensure their communities recover from the pandemic and thrive. The COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic decline has laid bare the critical need to do more for our children and families. **We must act now! Next session may be too late for many child care providers struggling to stay afloat, and for those families trying to get back on their feet.**

1. **A.7582 (Hevesi)/S.6706A (Brisport) – Allowing Social Services Districts to Expand Child Care Subsidy Eligibility**

Amends Social Services Law 410-w to provide localities with the discretion to increase the income eligibility criteria for child care up to 85% of state median income. In this year's budget, New York directs federal stimulus funds to localities ensures access to all eligible families earning less than 200% of federal poverty level for the next three years. While this is a critical and positive step toward enabling more low-income working families to access child care, it still leaves out thousands of NY working families and we can do more. In fact, many communities across the state already serve all families earning less than 200% of FPL, among them New York City which is home to more than half a million children under 5, or 46% of New York state children. This law would enable such localities to expand access further, bringing us closer to the long range goal of universal affordable access.

2. **A.7661 (Hevesi)/S.6655 (Brisport) – Decoupling child care subsidies from parents' hours of work.**

Amends state law to align with discretion that federal law already provides regarding the hours of subsidized care a child may receive. Without this discretion, localities can only pay a subsidy for children to cover the exact hours a parent is working, a rule that can lead to children being pulled in and out of care as parents' work hours fluctuate, disrupting learning for children, and creating more financial uncertainty for providers.

3. **A.5840 (Clark)/S.5162 (Brisport) – Child Care Provider Direct Deposit Act**

Allows providers to receive subsidy payments from the county via direct deposit. Currently, to receive a payment for caring for a child receiving a subsidy, providers must submit a bill every month to the county. Providers then wait for the county to process, audit and approve the submission, draft a check, and then return it by mail. It is not uncommon for providers to wait multiple months. This is an unnecessary hardship for child care providers that has been intensified during the pandemic particularly for smaller providers struggling to make ends meet.

4. **A.7093 (Clark)/S.6865 (Kennedy) – Remove Work Requirement for Student Parents Receiving Child Care Subsidies**

Removes the work requirement and allows those receiving child care subsidies to devote the requisite amount of time to succeeding in their educational program.

5. **A.7095 (Clark)/S.6077 (Brisport) – Child Care Pay Rate Differential**

Requires all districts to offer the full 15% differential for providing care to children from families experiencing homelessness, and for children who need care during non-traditional hours (evening, nights, and weekend).

6. **A.7468 (Clark)/S.3903 (Kennedy) – Child Care Cost Study**

Requires that a cost estimation model be utilized for each category of care for which a market rate is determined, and would help New York get closer to understanding the true cost of providing high-quality child care.

7. **A.7721 (Clark) – Extend the Term and Expand the Scope of Child Care Availability Task Force**

Extends the term and expands the scope of Child Care Availability Task Force to oversee and monitor implementation of the Task Force's recommendations.

Thank you for your ongoing dedication to children and families. We hope you will take these additional steps to further strengthen the ability of the state and localities to provide child care assistance to more children and families and to support our child care providers and workers. We all depend on the success of this effort to ensure we recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,

82nd Street Academics
A Better Balance
Alliance for Quality Education
American Association of University Women - Rockland County
Brightside Up
Campus & Community Children's Center
Capital District YMCA
Care a lot
Care-a-lot Child Care
Child and Family Resources, Inc.
Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam, Inc.
Child Care Council of Nassau, Inc.
Child Care Council of Orange County, Inc., Resource & Referral Services
Child Care Council of Suffolk, Inc.
Child Care Council of Westchester
Child Care Resources of Rockland, Inc.
Child Care Solutions, Inc.
Child Development Council
Children's Aid
Children's Institute
Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc.
Citizen Action of New York
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)
Community Action Organization of Western New York
Cortland County Chamber of Commerce
Day Care Council of New York
Early Care & Learning Council
Early Childhood Alliance Onondaga
Early Childhood Development Initiative of Rochester - Monroe County, Advocacy Committee
Early Childhood Education Quality Council
Early Learning Training Academy
ECE on the Move
Elsa daycare
FPWA
Generations Child Care, Inc
Good Shepherd Services
Greater Rochester Summer Learning Association
Harlem Road Children's Center, Inc.
Honeydew Drop Playhouse
Main Street Children's Academy
Marks of Excellence
Mary's Little Lambs Inc

My Precious Angels Childcare
New Rochelle Day Nursery
New York Association for the Education of Young Children
Northern Rivers Family of Services
Planned Parenthood Empire State Acts
Prevent Child Abuse NY
Pro Action
Queen City Early Childhood Center
"Ripen With Us" Child Care Center, Inc.
Restaurant Opportunities Centers (ROC) United
ROC-NY
Schenectady Day Nursery, Inc.
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
SEIU Local 200United
Southern Adirondack Child Care Network
SUNY Cortland Child Care Center
The Children's Agenda
Tiffany Malone
Toot-Toot Daycare
UJA Federation of NY
United Neighborhood Houses
Unity House
Westchester Children's Association
Western New York Child Care Action Team
WNY Women's Foundation
WNYCCAT
YMCA of Greater New York
Young Wonders Early Childhood Center
Your Village
YWCA Binghamton & Broome County
YWCA Jamestown
YWCA Niagara Frontier
YWCA Western New York
YWCA Westfield
YWCA White Plains & Central Westchester
YWCAs of NYS