Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy

SCAA
Schuyler Center
for Analysis and Advocacy

2019-2020 PRIORITIES – OVERVIEW

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GOAL: ALL NEW YORK CHILDREN HAVE A FAIR OPPORTUNITY TO THRIVE

Since 1872, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy has advanced policies that strengthen New York families and improve child well-being so all New York children have a fair opportunity to thrive. Our priorities this year, as in the past, focus on strengthening families before they experience crises or trauma and preventing families from enduring hardships like ill-health, economic insecurity, child welfare involvement, or encounters with juvenile justice. Another overarching priority: ensuring comprehensive and strategic investment in our youngest New Yorkers, ages 0 to 3, when their brains and bodies are most rapidly developing, with impacts that can last a lifetime.

New York State boasts the 14th strongest economy in the nation, yet we rank 31st in overall child well-being, and 39th in economic well-being.[1,2] With the economy humming and unemployment at record lows, there is simply no excuse for a child poverty level that exceeds 20% overall, and nearly 30% among children of color.[3,4] It is well established that policies that shelter young children from harm and deprivation, and nurture solid developmental and educational foundations, have among the best returns on investment.

New York's children are rich in their diversity: 37% reside in immigrant families; 30% speak another language at home; more than half are black or brown.[5,6,7] Damaging policies that target immigrants, weaken civil rights and labor protections, diminish access to health care – such policies take direct aim at hundreds of thousands of our children. We are proud that New York stands strong in opposition to punishing policies coming out of Washington that would strip individuals and families of health coverage by rolling back the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid; dismantle immigrant families with indiscriminate enforcement policies; drive families away from services critical for child well-being by expanding the definition of public charge.

We are hopeful that New York's leaders recognize that essential to fulfilling their pledge to create an equitable, welcoming New York, is placing the well-being of our children and families at the very center of their policy agendas.

What follows are Schuyler Center's policy priorities for New York children and families for 2019-2020. These are not the only policies or investments New York families and children need to thrive, but these are among the most critical. We will be working every day in the coming months to advance these priorities – for the good of our children, our families, and our state.

Goal 1. NYS comprehensively invests in and integrates policies to improve health and well-being of all New Yorkers in their first three years of life. Investments when children are very young yield returns over a lifetime and an unparalleled return on investment. Children are more ready for school, more likely to graduate from high school, healthier over a lifespan, and more likely to contribute to New York's success. We know what works, but we can't leave it to one sector or one agency or a few communities. New York must build on the First 1,000 Days on Medicaid to include cross-sector policies in public health, housing, child care, tax policy, preventing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), child welfare, and beyond.

Goal 2. NYS expands and improves family-based foster care; reduces use of congregate care. New York State should help counties strengthen their use of relative and family-based foster care to meet new federal requirements and support better outcomes for the children and youth in their care. To do this, the State should create a public-private transition fund to enable counties to innovate as they transition their practice model, and guide counties to review and strengthen policies related to the use of relative resources to facilitate kin becoming foster parents.

Goal 3. NYS expands and improves preventive services to strengthen families. To ensure that children and families across the state have access to high-quality preventive services when they are needed, the State should restore funding for protective and preventive services from 62% state share back to 65%, as is written in state statute. New York also has the opportunity to receive new federal funding for evidence-based preventive services under the Family First Act – we urge the State to take up this option.

Goal 4. NYS strengthens NY's working family tax credits as part of a larger strategy to build family economic security and reduce child poverty. Working family tax credits encourage parents to work. They phase in as family income increases and bolster earnings for those making low wages. To make work pay for working families, the State should: (1) expand the state's child tax credit (Empire State Child Credit) to cover children under age four, and double the credit for young children; (2) expand and strengthen the state's EITC by increasing the percentage of the federal credit paid to families from 30% to 40% and expand the credit to young adults without children (under age 25); and (3) increase the amount of child care expenses creditable under the state's Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit to better reflect the true cost of care, and enable more working families to afford high-quality child care.

Goal 5. NYS expands access to high-quality child care to all NY families that need it, and raise compensation for the child care workforce. The State should work with the new Child Care Availability Task Force toward advancing a comprehensive plan to restructure and equitably expand access to quality child care to all NY families that need it; support and fairly pay child care educators; and serve all children, with a focus on children with special needs, children of all cultures, and infants and toddlers. In the 2019-2020 Budget, the State should make investments that shore up the child care system while the task force is developing a comprehensive plan, including expanding access to child care subsidies to the many low-income families unable to access these subsidies and increasing wages and supports for the struggling child care workforce.

Goal 6. NYS rationalizes and increases investment in public health programs that protect and promote population health. New York is recognizing the impacts of and the costs associated with the social determinants of health and population health on the overall costs and quality of health care. And public health systems must address emerging diseases and the impact of chronic diseases. To meet these challenges, New York must restore cuts to the public health system that were made in 2017, and expand investment to ensure a strong, expansive public health system equipped to address myriad population health challenges.

Goal 7. NYS improves access to prevention, screening and treatment for maternal depression. Research is clear that maternal depression has negative consequences for mothers and children. While there is consensus that New York can and must take action to ensure that the needs of the mother and child are met, meeting these challenges is difficult because this issue sits at the uneasy intersection of health, mental health, child health, and child welfare. New York should develop policies that increase screenings and treatment along with better measurements and improved partnerships in communities.

Goal 8. NYS expands access to voluntary maternal, infant and early childhood home visiting to all eligible families who need it. Home visiting has been shown to improve birth outcomes, increase high school graduation rates, lower dependence on welfare services, and reduce the incidence of child maltreatment. New York should implement and expand upon the home visiting recommendations of the First 1,000 Days on Medicaid Workgroup to support better outcomes for young children, including to design and launch a pilot in three communities to scale up evidence-based home visiting.

Goal 9. NYS invests $40 million to ensure that young children are counted in the 2020 Census. Every year, more than $53 billion in federal funds is allocated to New York and localities based on Census data, including billions for programs that benefit children, such as Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (Child Health Plus), education grants, Head Start, foster care and child care assistance. The 2010 Census missed nearly one in ten children aged 0-4, or about 2 million children. This trend of missing young children has been growing over the last several Decennial Censuses even as our ability to count other age groups has improved. Because an undercount could lead to a significant cut in programs that children and families rely upon for at least a decade to come, New York should invest this year – before it is too late –to enable community-based programs to engage in outreach to ensure all New Yorkers, including our youngest, are counted in the 2020 Census.

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[1]Andy Kierscz, Every US State Economy Ranked from Best to Worst. *Business Insider*. (March 15, 2018). https://www.businessinsider.com/state-economy-ranking-q1-2018-2;

[2] Kids Count Data Center: A Project of the The Annie E. Casey Foundation. New York: Kids Count Overall Rank, and Kids Count Economic Well-Being Rank. (2018). https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/9981-kids-count-overall-rank?loc=34&loct=2#detailed/2/34/false/37/any/19338; https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/7246-economic-well-being-rank?loc=34&loct=2#detailed/2/34/false/37,871,870,573,869,36,868/any/14340

[3] Kids Count Data Center: A Project of The Annie E. Casey Foundation. New York: Children in Poverty, 100%. (2017). https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/43-children-in-poverty-100-percent-poverty?loc=34&loct=2#detailed/2/34/false/871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133,38,35/any/321,322

[4]Kids Count Data Center: A Project of The Annie E. Casey Foundation. New York: Children in Poverty by Race and Ethnicity. (2017). https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/44-children-in-poverty-by-race-and-ethnicity?loc=34&loct=2#detailed/2/34/false/871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133,38,35/10,11,9,12,1,185,13/324,323

[5] Kids Count Data Center: A Project of The Annie E. Casey Foundation. New York: Children in Immigrant Families. (2017). https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/115-children-in-immigrant-families#ranking/2/any/true/870/any/446

[6] Kids Count Data Center: A Project of The Annie E. Casey Foundation. New York: Children Who Speak a Language Other than English at Home. (2017). https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/81-children-who-speak-a-language-other-than-english-at-home?loc=34&loct=2#detailed/2/34/false/871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133,38,35/any/396,397

[7] Kids Count Data Center: A Project of The Annie E. Casey Foundation. New York: Child Population by Race. (2017). https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/103-child-population-by-race https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/103-child-population-by-race#detailed/1/any/false/871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133,38,35/68,69,67,12,70,66,71,72/423,424