

Dear Governor Cuomo:

On behalf of the undersigned children's advocates, child care providers, resource and referral agencies, parents, and faith, business and labor leaders, we applaud Governor Cuomo's convening of the Child Care Availability Task Force, as called for by legislation sponsored by Assembly Member Ellen Jaffee and former Senator Tony Avella, and strongly supported by the New York Legislative Women's Caucus and the Women of Color Task Force of the Black, Hispanic, Puerto Rican and Asian Legislative Caucus. We urge the Task Force to seize this opportunity to develop a concrete, comprehensive plan to equitably expand access to high-quality child care to all New York families that need it.

We challenge the Task Force to be bold in its recommendations.

New York State has the strongest Paid Family Leave benefit in the nation (guaranteeing 6.4 million working families annually with 12 weeks leave at approximately two-thirds pay), and is a leader on pre-K (particularly in New York City, which offers full-day pre-K to all 4's and is now adding 3's). In contrast, the State's child care system -- the bridge between these programs and a critical service for working families with young children -- is broken. It is time for New York to fix this bridge and provide quality child care to all New York families that need it.

Small measures and quick fixes will not meaningfully expand access to the thousands of New York families that need child care, nor build a well-supported, stable early childhood workforce. Toward that end, we urge the task force to put forth **a comprehensive plan** to restructure and improve the State's child care system that does the following:

- Makes child care accessible and affordable to all children from birth through school-age;
- Ensures high-quality care by supporting the child care workforce and building a strong effective and streamlined professional development infrastructure;
- Includes and effectively accommodates children with special needs;
- Respects and reflects the many strengths, languages and cultures of all children and families; and
- Is respected by and integrated with the entire early childhood continuum, building upon the state's existing strengths based on the unique needs of each region of the state.

We urge the Task Force to make recommendations that ensure:

Generous eligibility for families to qualify for assistance. All low-income and middle-income New York families that need child care should qualify for, and continue receiving support until they have gained financial stability.

Equitable aid is provided to all low- and middle-income working families. While the assistance for families can vary in amount and type according to income level or other factors, it is essential that the assistance is provided such that it can be utilized by all families that need it to access quality care. For instance, refundable tax credits are usually not practical for low-income families who live paycheck to paycheck, but may be effective for some middle-income families.

Assistance is provided at fair levels. It is essential to ensure that providers are reimbursed or contracted at levels that reflect the true cost of care so they are not discouraged from enrolling families that receive state support, can offer high-quality care, and can pay teachers fair wages and reduce turnover.

New funding mechanisms to support quality child care are identified. The State cannot make significant strides toward expanding access to quality child care to all families that need it without identifying and dedicating new funds for child care.

Data is gathered and systems established to enable the State to track and evaluate relevant data related to child care. The Task Force presents an opportunity to evaluate meaningful data about the barriers families face to accessing quality child care, challenges providers and educators face to providing quality care, and the impact child care inaccessibility has on business and economic development.

Now is the time for New York State to Act on Child Care

The Child Care Availability Task Force is a unique opportunity for New York State to develop a comprehensive plan to address the state's child care affordability and accessibility challenges. The development and enactment of such a plan could spur economic growth, ensure our State's children receive high-quality care, and build on the success of paid family leave to position New York State as the best place in our nation to raise a family. We look forward to working with the Task Force, the Legislature, and the Governor to ensure that affordable and accessible quality child care is one of the State's top priorities.

Cc: Sheila Poole, Commissioner, NYS Office of Children and Family Services
Roberta Reardon, Commissioner, NYS Department of Labor
Melissa DeRosa, Secretary to the Governor
Paul Francis, Deputy Secretary, NYS Health and Human Services
Kerri Neifeld, Assistant Secretary for Human Services
Kelli Owens, Director of Women's Affairs
Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie
Assemblymember Ellen Jaffee

Sincerely,

Abeja Montessori
Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance
Advocacy Center of Tompkins County
Advocates for Children of New York
Alcohol & Drug Council of Tompkins County, Inc.
Alliance for Quality Education
Capital District Child Care Council
Care-a-lot Child Care

Catholic Charities
Center for Children's Initiatives
Chautauqua County Education Coalition
Chautauqua Lake Child Care Center
Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam, Inc.
Child Care Council of Nassau, Inc.
Child Care Council of Orange County Inc.
Child Care Council of Suffolk, Inc.
Child Care Council of Westchester
CHILD CARE COUNCIL, INC.
Child Care Resource Network
Child Care Resources of Rockland, Inc.
Child Care Solutions, Inc.
Child Development Council of Central New York, Inc.
Child Development Support Corporation
Children's Aid
Chinese-American Planning Council
Citizen Action of New York
Citizens Committee for Children of New York, Inc.
City of Cortland
Cortland Child Development
Cortland County Chamber of Commerce
Cortland County Child Development Day Care Program, INC.
Cortland Regional Medical Center
Daycare Council of New York
Early Care & Learning Council
Early Childhood Alliance Onondaga
ECE ON THE MOVE
Empire Justice Center
Empowerment Collaborative of Long Island, Inc.
Every Child Matters
Family Child Care Association of New York State
Family Enrichment Network, Inc.
Generations Child Care, Inc.
Greek Peak
Help Me Grow
Hunger Action Network NYS
Illume Projects, LLC
Ithaca Community Childcare Center
New York Paid Leave Coalition
New York Union Child Care Coalition
Niagara Organizing Alliance for Hope (NOAH)
NY Early Childhood Professional Development Institute

NY State Council of Churches
NYS Network for Youth Success
Parent Child Home Program
Prevent Child Abuse New York
Rhythm and Rhyme Childcare Center
RocACTS Education Task Force
Rochester Childfirst Network
Schenectady Day Nursery School Childcare Center
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
Smart Start
Southern Adirondack Child Care Network
Southern Tier 8 Regional Board
St. Peter RC Parish
Storybook Child Care, Inc
SUNY Cortland Child Care Center
The Children's Agenda
The Christ Redemption Tabernacle
The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc.
The Parent-Child Home Program
The YMCA of Greater Rochester
Tompkins Chamber
Tompkins County Area Development
Tompkins County Chamber & Tompkins Cortland Community
College
United Way of Buffalo & Erie County, Inc.
United Way of Cortland County, Inc.
United Way of Central New York, Inc.
Westchester Children's Association
WNY Women's Foundation
Women's Diversity Network
YWCA Cortland
YWCA of Binghamton-Young Wonders Early Childhood Center
YWCAs of NYS