



## Empire State Campaign for Child Care

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### **Winning Beginning NY and Empire State Campaign for Child Care: This Executive Budget Leaves Us No Choice but to Question the State's Commitment to Solving NY's Child Care Availability Crisis**

Winning Beginning NY and the Empire State Campaign for Child Care, statewide coalitions representing more than 75 child advocacy organizations, child care providers, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, and unions, along with parents, educators, and faith leaders, are deeply concerned that Governor Cuomo included no new state investments in child care in his Executive Budget.

New York's child care system is in crisis. High quality child care, costing an average of \$15,000 annually per child, is prohibitively expensive for nearly all low- and middle-income families, and fewer than 20% of low-income families eligible for child care subsidies are receiving them. Child care educator salaries are so low that many live in or near poverty (the average median wage is \$12.38 an hour or \$25,760 per year). Child care providers, unable to meet rising costs, are closing their doors in rising numbers. Another year of underinvestment in child care will not only leave thousands of New York working families scrambling to find quality, affordable child care, it will jeopardize the very survival of the state's child care infrastructure.

Our disappointment in this lack of new investment is particularly sharp given the tremendous work undertaken by the Governor's Child Care Availability Task Force over the past year to address this crisis. Indeed, the Task Force appears poised to recommend a bold, comprehensive plan to create a high quality child care system that will be accessible to all. This Executive Budget feels like a wakeup call. This marks the third Executive Budget since Governor Cuomo signed legislation creating the Task Force; none have contained any meaningful new state investment in child care. This repeated lack of investment leaves us no choice but to question the Governor's commitment to the principles set forward by the Task Force.

Further, while we welcome the Governor's proposal to expand the state's child tax credit to cover New Yorkers under age four, it is a mistake to suggest, as is done in the Budget Briefing Book, that this \$330 per year credit (at its maximum) will provide meaningful help to families facing annual child care bills that easily exceed \$10,000. In fact, the Empire State Child Credit is a working family tax credit, intended to make low-wage paychecks stretch further to cover the everyday high costs of raising children. This credit is not intended to, nor is it robust enough, to enable low-income working families to afford child care. So, too, we welcome new investment in pre-K, but note that does not help families in urgent need of quality, affordable child care for their babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers, nor those in the many school districts without pre-K, nor those needing after school care for their school age children.

To prevent New York's child care system from falling into further decline, and to lay the groundwork for the state to develop a model child care system that provides all New York families access to quality, affordable child care, New York needs to make at least two building block investments in child care this year: \$40M to create a fund to increase workforce compensation and improve child care quality; and \$60 million to incrementally increase guaranteed eligibility levels and decrease the co-payment multiplier.

We recognize that New York is facing fiscal challenges. However, New York's budget cannot, and should not be balanced on the backs of New York children, families and other struggling New Yorkers by cutting or continuing to underfund essential services. **In the 30-day amendments to the Executive Budget, we urge Governor Cuomo to include significant investments in child care that will both meet the immediate needs of more families, educators and providers this year, and begin to develop New York's child care system into one that ensures that child care is equitably accessible to all New York families that need it.** New York children and families cannot wait another year.