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NYS Legislators to the NY Congressional Delegation: New York Cannot Reopen Without Robust Federal Funding for Child Care

More than sixty New York State Senators and Assemblymembers, Democrats and Republicans, delivered a letter yesterday to New York's Congressional delegation calling upon its members to ensure that the next federal COVID relief package contains **at least \$50 billion for child care to assist states across the nation, including New York, to safely reopen and recover in the wake of the pandemic.**

"As you know all too well, New York has been dealt a devastating blow by the COVID-19 pandemic," **the Legislators wrote to their federal colleagues.** "Recovery will be long and difficult, particularly for those communities hit the hardest, among them communities of color, and families with children. One of the fundamental public services families will need to enable them to reengage with the labor market and regain economic stability is safe, high-quality, affordable child care – a service on the brink of collapse after being weakened by decades of underinvestment, followed by the sharp blow of the pandemic."

"As we look forward towards fully reopening the American economy, it is crucial that Congress be proactive and allocate the necessary monies to ensure that families have access to affordable and adequate child care. Research shows that high-quality child care can benefit not only our children but also the fiscal health of our general communities. However, the availability, accessibility, and affordability of quality child care is a challenge for so many families across our country," **Assemblywoman Michaëlle Solages, one of the leaders of the effort stated.** "An investment in the early years of childhood will provide the building blocks for academic achievement and overall health. We cannot leave a generation of infants and toddlers without the proper tools for success."

The lawmakers expressed their appreciation for the initial \$3.5 billion investment made through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act in emergency funding provided through the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) to support child care providers and the families they serve. They noted that New York has committed part of its share of child care funds (\$164 million) to child care scholarships for some essential workers. They also noted that Governor Cuomo's Child Care Availability Task Force recently sent recommendations to the Governor for how to use the remaining funds to safely provide child care to more families as New York begins to slowly reopen.

"Working families in Brooklyn and across New York State depend on affordable, high quality, safe child-care options," said Senator Julia Salazar, another leader on the letter, "and it is urgently necessary for the federal government to step up and provide funding to make sure that a wide range of child-care options remain available for working parents. Particularly in communities of color and communities with wide-spread poverty, the health-care emergency

has made it difficult for child-care operators to stay open and many families also have been hard hit by the financial impact of the pandemic. At least \$50 billion in federal financial assistance for child-care is necessary. We call upon our Congressional delegation to address this urgent need as soon as possible."

"Safe, quality, child care is a critical component to a strong, thriving economy. Without supportive financial framework in place for the childcare industry to reopen, working families - and our national economy - will deeply struggle to move past the fallout of the pandemic and regain solid footing," **said Senator Tim Kennedy, a long-time leader for child care.** "By dedicating this funding for providers, educators, and parents, Washington would be sending a clear message: fostering strong families is a national priority, and the pursuit of the American Dream remains a promising path forward."

The legislators stressed, however, that much more investment is needed. Hundreds of thousands of New York parents are being called back to work, and yet New York still does not have a sustainable plan to ensure safe, affordable child care for all families that need it - in part because it does not know if it can rely on additional federal support for child care as it fashions its reopening plans. Data collected by New York State reveals that 25% of child care providers across the state have closed, and will need substantial support to reopen. As New York parents return to work, the high costs of child care- nearly impossible for most families to cover in the best of times at an average cost of \$15,000 a year for an infant - may rise at a moment when many families will be facing salary a roll-back in hours or pay. This is because providers will be facing substantially higher costs associated with keeping facilities clean and disinfected, and to operate at reduced enrollment to allow for social distancing. Providers will have to ask parents to pay more in the absence of substantially new public investment; there is a good chance parents will be unable to cover even pre-pandemic costs.

New York legislators join educators and parent from around the nation and request that Congress provide at least \$50 billion in total funding dedicated to child care to offer immediate relief to families, providers, educators, and the many critical businesses that employ parents during this crisis.

This letter follows on the heels of a #ChildCareIsEssential [press conference and virtual rally](#) held on June 11, 2020, and attended by more than 450 child care providers, parents, advocates and NYS lawmakers who came together virtually from around the state to urge New York State to immediately invest the remaining \$134M in federal child care CARES Act Funds the state was allocated in early April, and \$88M in committed state afterschool funds to enable child care and afterschool to ensure there is safe care for New York children this summer and beyond. **The rally participants, like the New York legislators in the letter released today, also called upon the New York Congressional delegation to ensure that the next federal relief package contains at least \$50 billion for child care to assist states to safely reopen and recover in the wake of the pandemic.** New York cannot recover from the devastating losses and impacts of the epidemic alone.