



## **SCHUYLER CENTER FOR ANALYSIS AND ADVOCACY**

### **2021-2022 New York State Policy Priorities**

The COVID-19 crisis and the movement to end racist violence have highlighted what we have long known: for New York children to thrive, they need a family, quality health care, early education, financial security – not one, but all of these things. Further, they need all the systems upon which children and families rely to be aligned and coordinated, well-resourced and anti-racist. So is it with all New Yorkers.

What follows are our 2021-2022 Policy Priorities for children and families and all low-income New Yorkers. We advance these priorities with our eyes wide open to the extraordinary public health, political and financial challenges facing New York. However, the State’s response cannot be to deny New Yorkers fundamental supports and services. Nor can New York’s strategy be to wait for the federal government to act – although federal assistance has to be part of the solution. Rather, the response must be to exert strong leadership, harness a sense of shared responsibility, and raise, borrow, and shift resources to ensure children and families receive all the supports they need.

#### **New York State prioritizes policies to dramatically reduce child poverty, with a focus on racial equity, and to strengthen family economic security.**

- ▶ New York State publicly commits to cutting child poverty in half across all of New York’s diverse communities by 2030, and begins – this year – to implement strategies proven to reduce child poverty and racial inequities, and move families, including families of color, into economic security as set forth in S.9012 (Ramos)/A.11063 (Bronson).
- ▶ As a first step toward reducing child and family poverty, New York State commits to holding children harmless should budget cuts become necessary.
- ▶ New York State orients the state’s tax code to benefit low-income families, children, and young adults by:
  - Creating a robust, fully refundable young child tax credit that is widely available, including to very low-income and immigrant families as set forth in A.8835-A (Hevesi);
  - Increasing and expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit, including by expanding it to cover childless workers under age 25; and
  - Improving the structure of refundable family tax credits to allow a quarterly payment option, and making the EITC available to more immigrant New Yorkers by adjusting filing requirements.

## **New York State expands and improves health and public health supports, particularly for families and children.**

- ▶ New York State ensures all moms and infants in first three years of life have continuous health coverage and expands coverage for and access to maternal, infant, and early childhood home visiting, making it available to all families who would like to receive services.
- ▶ New York State improves prevention, screening, and treatment for maternal depression and other perinatal mood disorders, including expanding training on maternal mental health for providers working with pregnant and post-partum women and ensuring every expecting/new mother receives one or more consultations that includes mental/social emotional screening pre- and post-delivery/discharge.
- ▶ New York State enacts legislation (A.7213-A(Fahy)/S.8925(Stavisky)) designed to generate critical data about the health workforce that will inform and improve health planning, access, and emergency preparedness. In the wake of a pandemic and with the certainty of future outbreaks, this bill should be passed as soon as possible.
- ▶ New York State rationalizes and increases investment in public health programs that protect and promote community and population health.
- ▶ New York State expands and invests in telehealth, ensuring families have necessary resources/tools, providers are adequately compensated for tele-services, and regulations support telehealth.

## **New York State expands and improves early childhood development and education opportunities.**

- ▶ New York State swiftly releases remaining CARES Act recovery funds earmarked for child care in a manner that is equitable, accessible, and streamlined, and prioritizes those communities hardest hit by the pandemic, including by providing unrestricted stabilization grants to child care providers with an application process that is simple, streamlined, with minimal red tape, and with grants that are paid up front, not on a reimbursement basis.
- ▶ New York State's Governor's Child Care Availability Task Force releases a set of final recommendations that are bold, comprehensive, and move New York toward establishing universal access to quality, affordable child care within five years, and takes concrete steps, this year, to achieving that goal.
- ▶ New York State this year prioritizes and expands access to affordable, high-quality child care to families that need it, with a special focus on low-income families, and families and communities facing the challenges of structural racism, precarious immigration status, disability, child welfare involvement, homelessness, and unemployment or underemployment.

- ▶ New York State improves access to services and supports that help babies and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities by increasing payment rates for Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education professionals in the 2021-22 New York State Budget and aligning and better coordinating Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education programs.
- ▶ New York State expands maternal, infant, and early childhood home visiting to all eligible and interested families.

### **New York State improves child welfare by strengthening families.**

- ▶ New York State holds preventive services that strengthen families harmless from any budget cuts. In addition, funding for preventive services should be restored to 65% State share of costs, as provided in statute, from the current 62%; the increased funding should be reserved for community-based primary prevention services that reach families before there is a risk of removal to foster care.
- ▶ New York State enacts the preventive services data reporting bill (A.10513/S.8421), amending Social Services Law to require annual reporting on child welfare preventive services.
- ▶ New York State strengthens supports for older youth in and recently discharged from foster care, including significantly reducing the number of youth who “age out” of foster care by:
  - Issuing a temporary moratorium on “aging out” of foster care that remains in effect until 180 days after the state public health emergency has been lifted;
  - Enacting (A.10581/S.8834) that would amend the family court act to authorize youth who have “aged out” of foster care to return to care without waiting for court approval during the COVID-19 state of emergency;
  - Maintaining funding for the Fostering Youth Success Initiative (FYSI) at \$6 million; and
  - Strengthening its child welfare housing subsidy to adjust for rising housing costs.
- ▶ New York State expands and improves family-based foster care; reduces use of congregate care; expands and strengthens supports for kin caregivers by:
  - Maintaining the Family First Transition Fund by allocating \$3 million in public funding;
  - Maintaining funding for kinship caregiver support programs at \$2.5 million;
  - Implementing its newly announced kinship “firewall” without delay, and in a manner that effectively ensures that counties, in the foster care placement process, exhaust all possibilities of kin-based care before placing a child elsewhere and that any non-kin placement is approved by a senior director;

- Significantly reducing the number of children under the age of 13 in congregate care;
- Funding the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) independent of the Foster Care Block Grant (FCBG); and
- Establishing an office of the Foster Care Ombudsman.

**New York State's Medicaid program effectively and holistically serves all eligible New Yorkers.**

New York State ensures that people get the coverage, care, and services to which they are entitled and adequately supports the providers that serve them.