



Statement of Empire State Campaign for Child Care and Winning Beginning NY on the FY New York State FY 2021-2022 Budget

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Empire State Campaign for Child Care and Winning Beginning NY applaud the New York State Legislature and Governor Cuomo for game-changing investments made in early care and education in the FY 2021-2022 Budget. Through the use of Federal funding from the American Rescue Plan and previous rounds of Federal stimulus funding, as well as a tax increase on the highest income New Yorkers, the FY 2021-2022 New York State Budget takes large steps to expand access to child care subsidies, decrease parent costs for child care, equalize subsidy eligibility requirements throughout the State and expand Universal Pre- Kindergarten. Thanks to investments made in this budget:

- Thousands of low-income working families who are desperate for access to child care subsidies can come off of waitlists and enroll their children in high-quality affordable early childhood education and school-age child care programs;
- The cost of child care will decline for even more working families;
- An expanded early childhood Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), Quality Stars NY will help more programs improve and implement best practices;
- Child care providers that were forced to close doors due to the economic impacts of the pandemic, and those still open, but struggling, will have access to up-front stabilization grants; and
- Universal Pre-Kindergarten classrooms will expand throughout New York State.

This budget is a hard won victory for New York's parents and child care providers who made state leaders understand: recovery cannot happen without robust, sustained investment in early childhood education, including child care, and school-age child care programs. Throughout the pandemic, hundreds of parents and providers came together virtually and in socially distanced in-person events to speak for the needs in their communities. They shared their stories from the past year: of parents (disproportionately mothers) having to drop out of the workforce to care for children at home due to child care closures and the shift to remote learning; of child care providers, unable to keep their doors open due to the extraordinary new costs and challenges associated with the pandemic. Champions in the State Legislature, including the Chairs of the Assembly and Senate Committees on Children and Families, Assemblymember Andrew Hevesi and Senator Jabari Brisport, worked in solidarity with families and providers throughout New York State to achieve a final state budget that will not only save New York's struggling child care

sector, but also set New York on a transformational path to dramatically expanding access to early education, including child care and school age child care.

This victory could not have come at a more crucial time. Child care providers have struggled to keep their doors open as the pandemic destabilized enrollment. Now, with more businesses requiring in-person work, parents must be able to immediately secure access to child care. At the same time, with many New York children having experienced significant loss, stress, and trauma over this past year, the need for quality, stable, supportive early childhood care and education has never been greater.

There is more work to be done. New York State must ensure these policy changes and investments are rolled out quickly, effectively, equitably, and with significant and ongoing input from parents, child care providers, educators, and advocates. Key to the strength of New York's early childhood system is its commitment to "diverse delivery," meaning the state supports delivery of pre-K, child care and afterschool in public, home-based and community-based center settings. New York must continue to support diverse delivery by ensuring grant aid is equitably distributed, reaching all child care providers, including the home-based providers that nurture so many of our youngest New Yorkers often in the lowest-income Black, brown, immigrant and rural communities. This commitment must be maintained as it is critical to ensuring New York meets the needs of all New York's diverse families. **Finally, New York cannot claim to be moving toward universal access to child care if it continues to leave young children with developmental delays and disabilities behind; the state is overdue to prioritize – and invest – in early intervention and Pre-School Special Education services.** Empire State Campaign for Child Care and Winning Beginning NY look forward to working with State and Local policymakers to ensure these crucial investments strengthen child care throughout New York State.

"As a result of the agreement in this final budget, New York State will increase eligibility for child care subsidies to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level statewide while adding an additional 10,000 childcare slots, will provide \$1.26 billion in upfront stabilization grants to providers that can be used to increase wages and benefits for childcare workers, will cap child care co-payments to 10% of a family's income over the federal poverty level, will reimburse providers for 24 absences per child per year, will ensure 12 month eligibility for families in receipt of subsidies (increased from 6 months), will provide an additional \$50 million in funding for existing facilitated enrollment child care providers in 6 regions of the state over the next 2 years, will invest \$100 million to build new childcare capacity in areas of the state deemed to be child care deserts, will provide childcare scholarships for essential workers, and grants for supplies and PPE to providers.

In my 15 years in the State Assembly, I have never seen a budget that goes as far as this year's to assist New York's children and families. This would not have happened without the incredible leadership of Speaker Heastie and Majority Leader Stewart Cousins, Governor Cuomo, our partners in the federal government, all of my colleagues in the Assembly and Senate, especially Assemblymembers Lunsford, Clark, González-Rojas, as well as my friend, the Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Children and Families, Senator Jabari Brisport.

The real credit for these achievements for New York's children rests with the Program and Counsel and Ways and Means Staff of the State Assembly, Jenn O'Connor of Prevent Child Abuse NY, Dede Hill of the Schuyler Center and all of the relentless advocates, providers and parents involved with Winning Beginning NY/ Empire State Child Care Campaign, as well as my amazing staff in both Albany and the 28th Assembly district. It is my honor to serve as the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Children and Families and work alongside so many incredible people who brought these ideas to fruition," said **Assemblymember Andrew Hevesi, Chair of the Committee on Children and Families**

"In the face of a decade-long pattern of devastating service cuts, these victories for New York's children and families were won through the dedication and determination of advocates and community organizers across the state, who know that our children deserve better. We will continue to fight for more, because they are counting on us to do so," said **Senator Jabari Brisport, Chair of the Committee on Children and Families.**

"The pandemic has shown a light on what parents, providers, and early care and education advocates already knew-- that families and the NYS economy are dependent on child care. It is a concrete support for thousands and there is no "build back better" without it. I am grateful to our legislative leaders—especially Assemblyman Hevesi and Senator Brisport-- and to the Governor for wisely and strategically investing this incredible influx of funding from the federal government; a visionary approach that I believe aligns with the recommendations of the Governor's Child Care Availability Task Force. I look forward to working with state leaders to ensure that New York provides both immediate assistance to programs and parents, and implements long-term, sustainable system reform," said **Jenn O'Connor, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Prevent Child Abuse NY and member of Winning Beginning NY/Empire State Campaign for Child Care.**

"Today we celebrate the opportunity and hope that come with this budget", said **Gladys Jones, Executive Director, ECE on the Move and a co-facilitator of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care.** "These funds, if distributed quickly and fairly, will save thousands of struggling child care providers – most of them women-owned businesses, many Latinx, and women of color. Yet we celebrate with a heavy heart knowing how many child care providers were unable to hang on and have already closed their doors. As the founder and leader of ECE on the Move, a network of more than 550 home-based providers in the Bronx and Staten Island, I have heard the stories of struggle first hand. Providers have taken on thousands of dollars of credit card debt; tried to manage bills and debt collectors while in bed with COVID; many continued to provide care to their families even at the height of the pandemic because they knew the parents – many front-line workers – had nowhere else to turn. Let's do this right, New York. If we work together; if OCFS invites child care providers from around the state, and parents, to the decision-making tables early and often; we can transform New York child care."

"The opportunity this moment presents New York families and the child care providers that care for our youngest learners is extraordinary, particularly coming on the heels of one of the hardest years many New York families have ever faced. New York has a plan to strengthen, make more uniform and equitable, and dramatically expand access to high quality child care in the forthcoming recommendations of the Governor's Child Care Availability Task Force; it has record funds flowing from the federal government, along with federal leadership committed to

supporting early childhood; and now it has a budget that will usher in dramatically expanded access to child care immediately! I look forward to continuing to work with our many, visionary legislative champions, chief among them Assemblymember Hevesi and Senator Brisport; the Governor's office and OCFS; and the tireless, brilliant parents, child care providers, educators and advocates of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care and Winning Beginning NY to ensure these policies and investments are rolled out effectively, equitably, and in a way that keeps driving New York toward our ultimate goal: universal access to child care," said **Dede Hill, Director of Policy at the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy and a co-facilitator of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care.**

"Three elements have always been critical to any legislative success; strong champions in government; informed and determined policy experts; and a grassroots movement that will not be denied." said **Blue Carreker, a co-facilitator of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care** "This budget marks a turning point for children and for working families in New York State, and sincere gratitude must go to our champions in the state legislature Assemblymember Hevesi and Senator Brisport; to our champions in Congress and particularly Senators Schumer and Gillibrand; and to the policy experts and leaders of ESCCC and Winning Beginning New York. But my greatest bow and appreciation must go to the literally thousands of parents and providers who rallied, called, emailed, posted and demanded to be heard, even as they struggled for survival during the COVID pandemic. Chief among those who must be recognized and who will continue to demand that the budget decisions will result in real on the ground change, are the child care providers from CSEA, ECE on the Move, and the Western NY Child Care Action Team; the leaders at regional Child Care and Referral Agencies; and to the parents and activists of the Alliance for Quality Education. This victory belongs to you!"

"The pandemic laid bare how crucial child care was for New York's communities and ensured that essential workers could aid the City and State's recovery when we were at the epicenter of the disease" said **Gregory Brender, Director of Public Policy at Day Care Council of New York** "I am thrilled that the FY 2021-2022 budget invests in stabilizing the child care sector. These investments are crucial to our recovery."

This budget is a tremendous win for the child care community and hopefully a true turning point for a failing system. The Early Care and Learning Council stands with our partners in thanking our legislative leaders and the Governor's office for their commitment to the stewardship of funds and helping the families and providers that continue to struggle over a year into the COVID-19 pandemic. The Child Care Resource and Referral agencies throughout the state are eager to work in communities to utilize new resources to help build the supply of child care in order to address child care deserts, help women return to the workforce, and continue to strengthen the quality of child care businesses. " said **Jessica Klos Shapiro, Director of Policy and Community Education at the Early Care and Learning Council**

"For too long communities throughout New York State have waited for the promise of Pre-Kindergarten to be filled." said **Marina Marcou-O'Malley, Operations and Policy Director at Alliance for Quality Education.** "With this investment, our communities can move toward meeting the needs of families for both education and child care."

“The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF) joins its partners in the Empire State Campaign for Child Care and Winning Beginning-NY in celebrating this tremendous step forward for New York State childcare.” said **Ramon Peguero, Esq. President & CEO at the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families** “We continue to stand alongside the many providers, parents, and community allies who have tirelessly fought for equitable access to affordable, high-quality, safe and culturally responsive early care and education. With these new federal and state investments, New York has the opportunity to start building back a better childcare system, that thoughtfully addresses the longstanding systemic inequities in access and support for working families and the early care educators who have continued to deliver these invaluable services, even through the height of the pandemic. We now must turn our attention towards rapidly, efficiently, and effectively getting these much-needed funds out to the families and providers who have been fighting for and are in much need of these resources.”

“The Kids Can’t Wait Campaign is grateful to members of the Assembly and Senate who pushed hard for the Early Intervention (EI) covered lives assessment to be included in the budget, and we are disappointed that Governor Cuomo opposed the inclusion of this proposal, which would have required commercial insurers to contribute their fair share to the cost of EI. Without this increased revenue, young children with developmental delays and disabilities will be forced to continue to wait for services and therapies they need. We commend the Assembly and Senate for making sure that a proposed cut to the EI program was not maintained in the final budget. In the post-budget legislative session, we will continue to push for increased access and equity in the Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education programs through passage of covered lives legislation (A.5339/S.5560A), EI cost study legislation (S.5676/A5676), and increased payment rates for preschool special education programs so that rates better reflect the costs of delivering services and children can receive their legally mandated services. We will oppose EI regulatory changes that limit the range of services available to children and families.” Said **Brigit Hurley, Senior Director of Advocacy and Programs at the Children’s Agenda**

“We are glad to see some important childcare investments that will continue critical support to many school-age children and families who have been impacted by COVID-19.” said **Kelly Sturgis, Executive Director of the New York State Network for Youth Success** “We are, however, deeply concerned that the final state budget dedicates the entire amount of federal funds available to afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs to local districts through additional Learning Loss Grants. The lack of dedicated funds to directly support afterschool is a devastating blow to expanded learning programs, a critical continuum of childcare, and the need to address learning loss for children in New York.

We call on the Governor and the Legislature to provide critical supports that:

- align with the comprehensive proposal developed in partnership with afterschool, youth development, and community schools partners,
- address crippling administrative and structural challenges facing the field, and
- include critical stakeholder input on the use of these funds, which are vital to the afterschool system

Afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs will continue their efforts to address learning loss through strong and strategic coordination with local school districts and partners, but can only do so effectively when adequately equipped and supported."

"CCC applauds the New York State Legislature and Governor Cuomo for making the necessary and significant investments in child care that this moment deserved. The robust federal funds included in the state budget will help more families access and afford child care, support the providers who care for our children, and help working families return to work and recover from this crisis," said **Jennifer March, Executive Director of the Citizens' Committee for Children of New York**. "We look forward to continuing to work with our local leaders, state legislative champions, and the Governor's administration to equitably and expeditiously distribute these funds, and to build on the gains made through additional and long-lasting state investments."

"Placing themselves at considerable risk, New York's family child care providers stayed open at twice the rate of centers to care for children of essential workers in the early days of the pandemic. Despite operating some of the state's highest quality programs, the state's family child care providers have been financially precarious for years as a result of underfunding. This investment is a lifeline for family child care providers, offering hope for the future." said **Christie Balka, Senior Policy Director, All Our Kin**

"Thanks to our tireless champions in the legislature, grassroots advocates, and partners in the ESCCC, this year's budget will bring much-needed relief to the families and providers whose needs have been compounded by the ongoing pandemic," said **Michelle Ming, Campaigns Manager at Citizen Action of New York**. "We are so excited to move one step closer to an equitable and accessible child care system for all in New York State."

Empire State Campaign for Child Care is statewide campaign dedicated to achieve equitable access to child care in New York State.

Winning Beginning NY is New York's early care and education coalition.