New York State Must Act Boldly to Address Challenges Facing Children and Families

Schuyler Center Statement in Response to Governor Hochul’s 2022 State of the State Address

January 5, 2022 - Following today’s State of the State address, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy is encouraged by Governor Hochul’s attention to health equity, child care access and child care workers, economic opportunity, and youth mental health.

Unfortunately, many of the Governor’s proposals fall short of meeting the great need that exists—especially when it comes to low income children. As advocates for children and families impacted by poverty, Schuyler Center calls on the Governor to think boldly and advance policies that will be truly transformative to New York’s children, families, and workforce.

New York State must take large, bold steps toward providing high-quality, culturally-responsive, universal child care this year. Governor Hochul’s proposed investments in child care included in the State of the State are not enough to begin to meet the needs of this crucial sector at this time, let alone begin the transformation of child care that New York children and families so desperately need.

With hundreds of thousands of New York families scrambling this month to make ends meet without the federal monthly pandemic child tax credit that ended on December 15, 2021, families need New York to end the State child tax credit’s irrational exclusion of: young children (under 4), very low-income children, and 17-year-old children, and increase the credit amount to meet the rising costs of raising children.

Strengthening families, and preventing New York children and families from becoming involved in the state’s child welfare system -- disproportionately children and families of color due to historic, structural, and ongoing racism -- must be a top priority of New York State. This year, New York has an opportunity to strengthen and begin to transform its child welfare system by reauthorizing the State’s successful preventive services funding, and restoring the State’s share of funding as written in statute. New York also must join 36 other states in establishing a publicly-accountable Office of the Child Welfare Advocate to serve the needs and interests of youth, biological parents, kinship caregivers, and foster parents navigating the child welfare system.

We applaud the Governor’s focus on health equity. Proposals that would reduce family costs in the Child Health Plus program and improve mental health services are greatly needed, especially in light of the pandemic. Governor Hochul’s plan to expand coverage and services for pregnant and post-partum women would have long-ranging, positive impacts; it is critical that all women can get coverage and access to services, including immigrant women. Schuyler Center supports inclusive and equitable health care for all.
The data clearly show that New York’s children and families need support more than ever, especially those living near or below the poverty line:

- As of June 2021, 7,175 New York children lost a parent or caregiver to COVID-19.
- In December 2021, 13.1% (nearly 1.7 million) of adults in New York State reported there was "sometimes" or "often" not enough to eat in their household during the period 12/1/21 through 12/13/21. Nationally, 9.7% of adults reported experiencing food insecurity during that same period.
- Last month, the U.S. Surgeon General spotlighted the growing youth mental health crisis, calling for a whole-of-society effort to mitigate the mental health impacts of the pandemic on young people.

Our founder, Louisa Lee Schuyler, spearheaded revolutionary change 150 years ago, when she advocated for better treatment of the state’s poorest residents and those living in institutions. Louisa believed that once State policymakers understood the challenges, they would act with compassion and do the right thing. We share our founder's belief in a government that works for the greater good, and we look forward to a continued partnership with Governor Hochul and her administration.

New York State has long been a leader when it comes to preventive services, supports, and services for children and families. As Governor Hochul recognizes, the pandemic has revealed the cracks where we can – and must – do better, and the areas where New York State can continue to lead the way on lifting children and families out of struggle and into opportunity. In 2022, the New York Dream simply cannot leave anyone behind.

View Schuyler Center’s full 2022 Policy Priorities.

On January 11, Schuyler Center will present the State of New York’s Children Data Briefing. Join us on Zoom for a dive into the numbers and the evidence-based policies we are advancing in support of New York State’s children and families. Registration is required.