January 11, 2023

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Executive Chamber
NYS Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

As a diverse group of organizations working to improve long-term outcomes for children and families from households experiencing economic hardship, we applaud your leadership enacting the Child Poverty Reduction Act and seating the Advisory Council. We look forward to continuing our work with you and the Council to reduce child poverty in New York State. We believe there are critical steps that can be taken in this year’s Executive Budget that will have immediate impact for New York’s children and families. The New York State Comptroller’s recent report on poverty in our state is a sobering reminder that for too long, New York has allowed millions of New Yorkers, among them hundreds of thousands of children, to experience the hardships of poverty—at a much higher rate than our neighboring states and the nation as a whole. Children in Black, Latinx, and immigrant families are disproportionately represented. We urge you to use this year’s Executive Budget to reverse this trend, and to put New York children first by making the following investments:

**Strengthen New York’s Child Tax Credit (CTC)** with (a) a robust credit for children under age four (a group currently excluded from New York’s credit); (b) restructure the credit so the highest credit goes to the lowest income families, by ending regressive minimum income requirement and phase-in; (c) increase the credit amount to provide families meaningful support; and (d) ensure the credit continues to be available to as many immigrant families as possible. The enhanced Federal Child Tax Credit enacted under the American Rescue Plan helped reduce child poverty nationwide to 5.2% in 2021 from 9.7% the previous year (using supplemental poverty measure, SPM). Strengthening the Empire State Child Credit to include younger children and all eligible families will be an important step to lifting children and families out of poverty.

**Continue building a high-quality, affordable child care** system and expanding access to high-quality child care to more families, prioritizing families with the lowest incomes, from historically underserved communities, and facing complex needs. This can be done by: establishing a short-term workforce compensation fund to immediately and significantly raise median child care worker pay so programs can hire and retain staff and ensure high-quality
care in the short term while New York State transitions to a new provider reimbursement methodology, with pay based on the true cost of high-quality care, including family-sustaining wages for child care professionals. The collapse of child care during the pandemic exacerbated challenges of an already underfunded system and caused providers to close or become unable to retain workers due to low wages. This resulted in many families unable to work due to the lack of access to child care. A 2022 poll of New York business leaders reveals more than 75% favor making more people eligible for child care subsidies and a $45,000 minimum wage for child care providers. A majority say a lack of child care workers is a serious issue for their business.

Advance continuous Medicaid health coverage for young children from birth through age six. Research shows that Medicaid coverage helps pull families out of poverty by providing access to affordable health coverage and lowering out-of-pocket costs. Medicaid increases the use of preventive health care services and diminishes financial hardship.

Establish the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP), as a state funded and administered housing voucher to provide rental assistance to eligible individuals and families, regardless of immigration status.

The above list is not exhaustive. We also support other policy initiatives, including making school meals universal statewide; establishing a food benefit program similar to SNAP for immigrant households; eliminating the sub-minimum wage and indexing the minimum wage to CPI or inflation; and making increases to the State EITC permanent and inclusive of tax-filers who are not citizens. Otherwise, we support combining the New York EITC and CTC into one credit that is more generous than current credits, provides the maximum credit to the lowest-income taxpayers, and is available to tax-filers who are not citizens. We also look forward to the opportunity to work together to address issues with cash assistance, shelter allowance grants, and benefit cliffs.

Child poverty has lasting impacts on our children, families, and communities and disproportionately harms young children, Black and Latinx children, and children in immigrant families. Columbia University researchers estimate child poverty costs New York more than $60 billion per year. The Child Poverty Reduction Act and Advisory Council have built a strong foundation for New York to significantly reduce childhood poverty in our state. By taking the concrete steps outlined above in this year’s Executive Budget, you can continue to build on that foundation, and immediately bolster family economic security, child well-being, and racial equity.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics New York State
Children’s Aid
Children’s Defense Fund – New York
Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York
Community Service Society
Education Trust – New York
Empire Justice Center
Families Together in New York State
Prevent Child Abuse New York
Robin Hood Foundation
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
The Children’s Agenda
Westchester Children’s Association

cc:  James V. McDonald M.D., M.P.H., Acting Commissioner of Health
     Amir Bassiri, Medicaid Director
     Elizabeth Fine, Counsel to the Governor
     Kathryn Garcia, Director of State Operations
     Amanda Hiller, Acting Commissioner of Department of Tax and Finance
     Karen Persichilli Keogh, Secretary to the Governor
     Jihoon Kim, Deputy Secretary for Human Services & Mental Hygiene, Executive Chamber
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     Lonnie Threatte, Deputy Policy Director, Executive Chamber
     Daniel Tietz, Commissioner of the Office for Temporary and Disability Services
     RuthAnne Visnauskas, Commissioner of the Department of Homes and Community Renewal