

## PRESS RELEASE

### For Immediate Release

Contact: Katie Albitz ([kalbitz@scaany.org](mailto:kalbitz@scaany.org), 518-463-1896 Ext 132)

### **Child Care Educators, Families, and Lawmakers Call For \$1B Investment in the Child Care Workforce, Inclusion of All Children Regardless of Immigration Status, a Total Investment of \$5B in Child Care**

Albany, N.Y. (February 14, 2023) – Today, 250 child care educators, parents, and advocates from across New York State rallied at the Capitol as part of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care (ESCCC) Advocacy Day to call for an [investment of \\$5B](#) in child care in this year's budget, highlighting **the urgent need for the creation of a \$1B Child Care Workforce Compensation Fund and the inclusion of all otherwise eligible children in child care assistance, regardless of their immigration status.**

As parents and child care educators demonstrated in their stories today, the Legislature must make significant strides towards universal child care this year in order to ensure our State's child care system works as intended — as a support for New York's families and economy, not an additional stressor in the lives of hardworking New Yorkers.

Today's event underscored that until child care is compensated at a level appropriate for this essential family and economic support, there will not be enough child care for every family in New York that needs it. Additionally, we can only live our New York values when we ensure that all children are included in our child care system, regardless of their immigration status. The only solution to New York's child care crisis is a clear path to [universal child care](#) for every family in the State, with a well-compensated child care workforce.

**[For B-Roll of Legislator and Grassroots Speakers, Click Here](#)**

"New Yorkers across the state are dealing with the hard choice between taking time off work to care for their children because of the lack of affordable child care or paying exorbitant costs to get child care in their communities," **said Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins.** "The Senate Majority will continue to build on our work to expand access to affordable high-quality child care and fight for more economic opportunity for child care workers. Creating greater access to affordable childcare is a critical investment in New York's families and our state's economic future. I thank the Empire State Campaign for Child Care for their ongoing advocacy to support our families and promote thriving communities."

"As a parent who has struggled for years with getting child care through public assistance, I support this campaign for universal child care and particularly the demand that the government make the process of getting help with child care costs much easier," said **Mansie Meikle, a parent member of ECE on the Move.** "When I filed paperwork, I was told my papers were too old. This meant that for 5 months I had to travel an hour and a half to drop the kids off, an hour

and a half to go to work, an hour and a half to go pick up the kids, and an hour and a half to go home. Parents who want to work should not have to go through what I did, simply to make sure our children are safe and in good care. If there was better pay, there would be more providers, and more chances of finding a program that is close to your workplace.”

**Maria Ahrens, owner and director of Paper Planes Early Learning Center** said, “Despite the fact that research proves that a child’s brain develops more between the ages of 0-3 than any other time in their life, folks in charge of state (and federal) budgets refuse to acknowledge that an investment in this age group is the best and most vital investment that can be made towards children. Currently, the median hourly wage for an early childhood teacher working in our programs on LI is \$16.50 an hour, that’s \$31,838.00 per year before taxes come out, without benefits. It is imperative that the budget includes the immediate Workforce Compensation Fund of \$12,500 per child care provider and develop a true cost of care model for funding.”

“Parents and child care providers made it absolutely clear that last year’s budget didn’t contain nearly enough funding to prevent the collapse of the child care sector; Governor Hochul ignored them and now New York is facing the consequences. We simply cannot afford another year of half-measures — this is an emergency,” said **State Senator Jabari Brisport, Chair of the Children and Families Committee.**

“We cannot talk about expanding child care unless we take care of the workforce. The child care workforce is in crisis, these professionals are woefully underpaid and deserve a sustained investment, one off grants won’t cut it,” said **Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi, Chair of the Children and Families Committee.**

“Our child care providers have appreciated the financial help that they have received over the past few years, but now is not the time to stop this support,” said **Kathleen Murphy, Grants and Business Coordinator for Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam, Inc.** “Currently in Dutchess and Putnam counties, over 30% of our child care centers are not fully enrolled due to the lack of quality staffing and staffing turnover. In 2022, many of our afterschool programs could not open their doors due to the lack of staff. This vicious cycle of low pay for workers and cost prohibitive rates for quality child care must end.”

“As a mother, I have to work to support and take care of my daughter. But without child care support, it is really difficult for me to pick a full-time shift to be able to make more money. The average cost of child care is about \$20,000 per child a year — and with my low-paying job in the restaurant industry, I barely make ends meet. Millions of workers, like me, are suffering. I want our elected leaders to prioritize and help solve our child care crisis. I want to hear from them that they have my back,” said **Ronice Bryant, a restaurant worker in New York City.**

**Assemblywoman Sarah Clark** said, “Children are New York’s most important resources so supporting families with true universal child care must be a top priority. Yet currently our child care ecosystem is hanging on by a thread; caregiving wages are far too low in an already dwindling workforce, we have an overly bureaucratic system that doesn’t work well for families or providers, and rates are too high for parents struggling to make ends meet. The Empire State

Campaign for Child Care's legislative and budget priorities would shore up investments into child care that would help parents get back to work in a sustainable way, create more opportunities for children to receive care and help prevent more providers from having to close their doors. It's time for our state to lead through bold and transformational change. Thank you to my colleagues and all of the advocates standing here today to demand better for New York families and those who care for them."

**Senator Shelley B. Mayer, Chair, Committee on Education** said, "Accessible and affordable child care is fundamental for the prosperity of New Yorkers, and it is a pressing issue that must be addressed. As Chair of the Senate Education Committee, I am focused on increasing after-school programs in the state and other early childhood initiatives. We know that for every dollar we invest in child care and early childhood education, each community will benefit seven times over with long term benefits. I am committed to helping every New Yorker have the opportunities they deserve."

"When we invest in child care, we invest in families, we invest in businesses and we invest in our future," said **Assemblymember Monica Wallace**

"Child care workers are among those most essential workers that make our entire economy possible. They care for our most precious loved ones during the most critical time in their growth and development. You would think their compensation would match the value they add to our society, but we are losing them in droves because we have not garnered the political will to make the investments necessary to guarantee quality, accessible child care for every family in New York. Our budget has to go further than what we have already won, we need a \$1 billion Child Care Workforce Compensation Fund and full inclusion of every child in our state," said **State Senator Jessica Ramos, Chair, Committee on Labor**.

**Assembly Member Kimberly Jean-Pierre, Chair of the Legislative Women's Caucus**, said "With the 2023-24 budget deadline fast approaching, we have a real opportunity to provide New York families with the needed investments to make affordable, quality child care a reality for all. I am proud to stand with my colleagues in the Legislature to fight to fully fund child care which will provide more stability to providers, more opportunities for children and families, and an economic boon to our workforce sector."

"There has never been a more urgent need to pass universal childcare. The stark income and racial disparities in our society, particularly, when it comes to who has access to childcare have been exposed. Parents increasingly have to make the financially difficult decision of whether to return to work and pay the exorbitant cost of childcare or stay home to care for their child. This session, I will fight to further expand childcare to make sure that it is truly universal" said **Assemblymember Michaelle C. Solages, Chair of the Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic & Asian Legislative Caucus**

"As a father, I know how deeply we need strong investment into our childcare infrastructure in New York State. Governor Hochul's proposal to make child care more accessible is significant, but working families need more than the budget currently envisions," said **State Senator**

**Andrew Gounardes, Chair of Committee on Budget and Revenue.** “We must ensure that the tens of thousands of children who are income-eligible for childcare assistance don't miss out on this crucial public good because of their immigration status, that families don't have to wait long times to gain access to assistance, and more. I applaud the Empire State Campaign's work to ensure some of our most vulnerable young New Yorkers are truly included in this year's budget, and I look forward to working alongside them to make that a reality.”

“Childcare is essential for working families and for New York’s economy, yet so many families struggle to pay for affordable care,” **said Senator Roxanne J. Persaud, Chair, Committee on Social Services.** “Continuing upon recent historic investments will not only ensure that children and families have access to care; we will also give providers of every size and setting the tools they need to support quality programming and investments in their workforce.”

“New Yorkers cannot go to work without childcare. And, if we are not serious about investing in the workforce, there will not be any childcare programs for families. We need to invest \$1 billion in the workforce and cover all families, regardless of immigration status. The governor and the legislature need to do right by New Yorkers, we won't stop fighting until they do,” **said Jasmine Gripper, Executive Director, Alliance for Quality Education**

“High costs have left many New York families facing child care bills that amount to a quarter, or even 50%, of family income. The math just doesn't work for families. We support the Executive Budget proposals to expand eligibility further, to 85% of State Median Income (SMI), and cap family co-pays statewide at 1% of income over the Federal Poverty Level (FPL),” **said Dede Hill, Director of Policy at the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy.** “Importantly, one group of New Yorkers left out of these expansions—and left out of child care assistance altogether in most of the state—are immigrant families whose children are barred from accessing federal child care assistance. New York City is currently implementing a program to reach these children living in the City; it is up to New York State to assist the rest of the state's children.”

“All New Yorkers with young children deserve affordable, quality child care, including our undocumented neighbors. This is an issue I've fought hard to address in Albany, and one that I will continue to fight for this session. I'm proud to support legislation that will bring New York closer to achieving true, equitable, universal child care, strengthens the child care workforce, and removes unnecessary barriers to access. I urge my colleagues in the legislature and the Governor to include these proposals in our final budget,” **said Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas.**

“Working families depend on safe, quality, and affordable child-care across New York State. We need to ensure we're investing in a sustainable framework that once and for all demonstrates that fostering strong families is both a statewide and national priority,” **said Senator Tim Kennedy, Chair, Committee on Transportation**

“Without substantial financial changes, quality, accessible in-home childcare will continue to be in peril, they will continue to close their doors. Families will continue to be unable to find quality

child care in their community. The question is not is childcare in crisis, we know it is. The new question is how can we make impactful changes, to support our providers, children and families,” **said Heidi Jo Brandt, President CSEA VOICE Local 100A and owner of Heidi's House Daycare**

*Empire State Campaign for Child Care is a statewide campaign dedicated to achieving equitable access to child care in New York State. Founded in 2017, ESCCC counts in its membership nearly 100 organizations, along with hundreds of parents and child care providers from every corner of New York State. Every day, our membership is growing.*