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NY Made a Commitment to Cut Child Poverty:
Now It’s Time for Action

Remember the New York State Child Poverty Reduction Act? In 2021-22, the Legislature passed and New York enacted the landmark legislation, committing the State to cutting child poverty in half in a decade. The nation-leading Act had near-unanimous bipartisan support from upstate, downstate, rural, urban, and suburban legislators and constituents.

At the time, the message was clear: New York’s 20% child poverty rate is unacceptable, and it’s time to commit seriously to reducing that number.

Action is Needed This Year
As the 2023-24 NYS budget is developed, the sad truth is that many of our leaders aren’t putting the promise to cut child poverty into action.

Governor Hochul’s budget proposal does not take aim at cutting child poverty or the racial inequity associated with it. It’s now up to the Assembly and the Senate to prioritize our children whose daily lives and long-term futures are impacted by the day-to-day struggles to keep warm, feed their families, pay rent, and get to work.

This week, more than 80 organizations from across the state sent a letter urging legislators to include four specific poverty-fighting actions in the NYS budget.

“The 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,” said Kate Breslin, Schuyler Center President and CEO. “Legislative leaders must ensure that this year's budget makes thoughtful investments in evidence-informed interventions to make sure our babies, children, and youth have the opportunity to thrive, no matter their zip code.”
These are the critical, evidence-informed actions that should be taken in this year’s Budget to immediately assist New York’s children and families:

1. **Deliver tax relief to children in low-income families by strengthening refundable tax credits.** Specifically,
   - add a robust credit for children under age four, currently excluded from New York’s Empire State Child Credit (ESCC) (S.771/A.2464 and S.4952/A.3911) ($179 million); and
   - ensure the full credit goes to the lowest-income families, by ending regressive minimum income requirements and phase-ins (S.771/A.2464) ($44 million); and
   - increase the credit amount to provide families meaningful support (S.771/A.2464 and S.4952/A.3911); and
   - make the Earned Income Tax Credit EITC available to immigrant tax filers.

   The **Working Families Tax Credit** (S.2077/A.4022) would accomplish all of these. *The Governor’s Budget proposes nothing for the ESCC or EITC, though it proposes a significant new tax cut for the film industry.*

2. **Increase New York’s minimum wage and adjust it each year to keep up with rising costs (S.1978-A/A.2204-A).** The failure of the minimum wage to keep up with rising costs of living contributes to economic insecurity for families. *The Governor’s budget proposes automatic increases to the minimum wage, once it reaches $15/hour under existing law, with caps on the increases, delivering a raise of about $13 per week for the average affected worker.*

3. **Keep children and families housed by establishing the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) (S.568-A/A.4021), a state-level voucher program to provide housing stability to New York families at risk of homelessness.** Voucher programs have been shown to lower rent burdens, prevent eviction, and reduce the risk of homelessness. Stable housing is foundational to children’s well-being. A **$250 million investment would serve 13,760 households**, including nearly 4,000 families with children. *The Governor’s budget does not include a Housing Access Voucher Program.*

4. **Establish and fund statewide, permanent Healthy School Meals for All to ensure all students receive a healthy school breakfast and lunch at no cost each school day.** Nearly 600,000 children in New York State lack the food they need, and additional federal food assistance is slated to end in *March 2023*. Providing free meals for all students—regardless of income—is a proven strategy to reduce food insecurity, improve mental and physical health, support students’ ability to thrive academically, and bolster equity. *The Governor’s budget did not propose funding for free school meals.*
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 child poverty in our state, now it is time for real, meaningful action to support New York’s children.

Additional Resources:

- Letter to legislators from 80+ organizations calling for meaningful budget action to cut child poverty.
- Executive Budget Assessment: A key directive of the NYS Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council is assessing the potential impact of budget proposals on child poverty. This letter from Schuyler Center and our partners is an initial assessment of included proposals, and recommendations for actions that should be added to this year’s budget.
- Recording and materials: March 7 meeting of the Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council.
- Schuyler Center statement - Governor Hochul’s Budget Proposal: Modest Investments in Child and Family Well-Being, But Bold Action is Needed
- Analysis: First Look at the 23-24 Executive Budget Proposal

About Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy

Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (SCAA) is a leading statewide, nonpartisan, policy analysis and advocacy organization based in Albany, NY. SCAA works to shape policies to improve health, welfare, and human services for all New Yorkers, especially children and families impacted by poverty and inequitable systems. Learn more at www.scaany.org