



March 15, 2024

Dear Governor Hochul, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Speaker Heastie;

We write to you as a diverse group of organizations working to improve immediate and long-term outcomes for children and families experiencing economic hardship. Together, we urge you to make this year's Budget a statement of bold commitment to, and investment in, New York's families and communities.

Families across New York State are struggling to afford the increasingly high cost of living in our state. For more than a decade, New York has hovered around 30th in the nation for child poverty; three of the [top 10 cities](#) in the United States with the highest child poverty rates are in New York State: Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo; and in the Bronx, more than 1 in 3 children live below the federal poverty level (FPL).¹ In fact, poverty in New York has recently increased, following the expiration of pandemic relief policies: in 2022, nearly half a million *more* New York City residents lived in poverty than in 2021.²

Many more families across the state are struggling to make ends meet. Recent data shows that 56% of New York City residents (4.6 million people) had incomes below 200% of the poverty line in 2022.³ Stubbornly high inflation and record-high food costs are impacting families all across New York State.⁴ At the same time, COVID-19 pandemic relief initiatives have been rolled back, including expanded SNAP benefits, school meals, and enhanced child tax credits.

New York families clearly need relief now, and New York State can provide it this year with thoughtful investments. Ensuring that New York families are robustly supported cannot be accomplished by a single policy or initiative. Instead, the State must invest boldly in a comprehensive package of policies that makes it possible for children and families to grow, learn, thrive, and stay right here in New York State.

Goals for Child Poverty Reduction and the Policies Needed to Achieve Them

Goal 1: Make New York affordable for families. Increased income for families in or near poverty has been shown to be an effective poverty-fighting tool. The State must bolster its refundable tax credits so they can most effectively support New York families.

- Both the Senate and Assembly budget bills include proposals that would **strengthen the state's refundable tax credits**. To combat child poverty and make New York State more affordable for all families, it is critical that the Enacted Budget include a **family-focused, robust, refundable tax credit that targets the highest credit to the lowest income-earners**

(without any income phase-in) and is available to immigrant filers who file with an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number. Among the proposals with the most potential to cut child poverty and make New York more affordable for families is the Senate’s proposal to create and begin to implement a new refundable tax credit, the [Working Families Tax Credit](#), which would benefit an estimated 5.8 million New Yorkers, including 2.8 million children.⁵

- **Establishing a guaranteed income program to support infants and their parents as is included in both budget bills.** Targeting investment to families at this critical moment will provide some financial security for families at the start of their child’s life and will help the State meet its child poverty reduction targets by investing in a population that, all too often, experiences poverty.
- **Establishing and funding a permanent, statewide Healthy School Meals for All** program as proposed in both Houses’ budget bills. This would provide school breakfast and lunch at no cost to all students in schools participating in the National School Lunch Program – a strategy proven to reduce food insecurity and lift families out of poverty, saving families an estimated [\\$150 per month per child](#) on groceries.

Goal 2: Stabilize housing and reduce costs for [thousands of families](#), by:

- **Funding the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP),** as is proposed in both Senate and Assembly proposals, which would create a state-funded voucher. New York’s housing crisis is dire. While more housing is urgently needed, New Yorkers are facing homelessness now. HAVP is the flexible resource New York communities need. A commitment of \$250 million toward HAVP would have a transformative impact by helping tens of thousands of families and individuals exit or prevent homelessness.⁶

Goal 3: Support Working New Yorkers, by:

- Ensuring that the many parents who work variable hours in retail, the trades, the gig economy, and service industries can access child care by **ending the state’s practice of tying child care assistance to caretakers’ exact hours of work,** as proposed in both Houses’ budget bills. This long-standing practice has disproportionately kept low-income, immigrant and Black and brown New York families from accessing child care assistance.
- **Establishing a strong, expanded personal medical leave program that supports New York’s workforce.** Currently, New Yorkers are one cancer diagnosis, car accident, or difficult pregnancy away from losing their job, health insurance, and financial security. That is because New York’s current paid medical leave benefit (also known as temporary disability insurance or “TDI”) provides workers a mere \$170 per week – and no job protection. We applaud Governor Hochul for including updates to the TDI program in her proposed budget, but while her proposal adds an increased wage, job protection and continued health insurance coverage, it has a very long roll out, and fails to offer a wage that is meaningful for low wage workers. As lawmakers enter the final weeks of budget negotiations, we urge you to include, in the final enacted budget, a progressive wage to better assist low wage workers and their families; a faster roll out, and the ability to use this benefit in smaller time frames, to meet families’ needs. The changes outlined in S.2821-B (Ramos)/A.4053-B (Solages) would address these issues.⁷

Goal 4: Remove administrative barriers that prevent families from accessing, or cause families to lose access to, critical programs, including:

- Ensuring all eligible children remain **continuously enrolled from birth to age 6 in Medicaid and Child Health Plus (CHP)** health coverage, as is included in all three budget proposals.

With the passage of the Child Poverty Reduction Act in 2021 and establishment of the Advisory Council, New York made a serious, public commitment to combatting child poverty across the State. We urge the Council to continue New York's momentum toward reaching that goal by prioritizing, in this year's Enacted Budget, these recommended Budget items that are well-recognized for their poverty-fighting ability.

Sincerely,

New York Can End Child Poverty Lead Organizations:

Children's Defense Fund – New York
 Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC)
 Community Service Society of New York
 Empire Justice Center
 Families Together in New York State
 Feeding NYS
 Hunger Solutions NY
 New York Immigration Coalition
 NYS American Academy of Pediatrics, Chapters 1, 2 & 3
 Prevent Child Abuse NY
 Robin Hood
 Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
 The Bridge Project
 The Children's Agenda
 The Education Trust – NY
 United Way of New York City
 Westchester Children's Association

Supporting Organizations:

A Better Balance
 Alison Paul Grant Writing
 Ancient Song, Inc.
 Context Matters Strategy Group
 Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA)
 Court Appointed Special Advocates of NYC (CASA-NYC)
 Court Appointed Special Advocates of NYS
 Forestdale
 FPWA (Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies)
 FYSA
 JCCA
 Justice for Families, LTD
 Lawyers For Children

New York State Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services
 New York State Community Action Association
 New York State Council on Churches
 New Yorkers for Fiscal Fairness
 NYC Family Policy Project
 NYU Family Defense Clinic
 Poppy Muse Inc. (A Foster Care Agency)
 Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative
 The Alliance for a Hunger Free New York
 The Hub585
 The Legal Aid Society, Juvenile Rights Practice
 The Public Science Project
 Today's Students Tomorrow's Teachers
 United Community Center of Westchester, Inc.
 United Way of New York State
 United Way of the Dutchess-Orange Region
 United Way of the Greater Capital Region
 United Way of Westchester and Putnam
 Volunteers of America-Greater New York
 Westchester Youth Alliance
 White Plains Youth Bureau
 Youth Shelter Program of Westchester
 Yvote/Next Generation Politics
 YWCA White Plains and Central Westchester

¹ Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (2024). [A State Commitment to Reducing Child Poverty](#).

² Poverty Tracker Research Group at Columbia University (2024). [The State of Poverty and Disadvantage in New York City, Volume 6](#). Robin Hood.

³ Poverty Tracker Research Group at Columbia University (2024). [The State of Poverty and Disadvantage in New York City, Volume 6](#). Robin Hood.

⁴ United States Government Accountability Office. (2023). [Food Prices: Information on Trends, Factors, and Federal Roles](#).

⁵ Institute for Taxation & Economic Policy (ITEP)

⁶ NYU Furman Center. (Fall 2022). [A State-Level Rent Voucher Program](#).

⁷ A Better Balance. (2024). [Testimony to NYS Senate re: Strengthening New York's Paid Medical and Family Leave](#).