Schuyler Center Statement in Response to the Enacted 2025-26 NYS Budget

May 9, 2025 - As advocates for policies that support children and families experiencing poverty, Schuyler Center applauds the state budget investments that will bring opportunity to New York's children and families. Across New York State, thousands of families face the barriers of poverty-related hardships - from unsafe housing to food insecurity, from a lack of access to high-quality child care to an inability to provide for their children's basic needs. This year's state budget takes steps toward addressing those hardships and opening pathways to a bright future.

The 2025-26 New York State budget includes important and intentional investments that will begin to move the needle on child poverty and lower systemic barriers to opportunity.

As New York communities face threats to federal funding and safety net programs, thoughtful investments focused on those with limited resources can ensure New York's families are supported and that New York State is the best place for a child to learn, play, grow, and participate in a vibrant future.

Child Poverty Reduction: Progress Toward New York's Child Poverty Reduction Commitment; Full Advisory Council Recommendations Missing

The enacted NYS Budget includes a significant expansion of the state's child tax credit, the Empire State Child Credit. Schuyler Center has long championed an expansion of the state child tax credit, one of the most powerful tools in reducing child poverty.

With this expansion, families will receive a $1,000 credit for children younger than 4 years old, and a $500 credit for children ages 4-16, phased in over two years. This means more money for groceries, rent, birthday gifts, and summer camp.

Notably, the expanded child tax credit removes the income phase-in, ensuring that even New Yorkers with very low incomes – those most in need but previously excluded – will qualify for the full credit.

While this year's expansion of the child tax credit does not meet the full recommendations of the NYS Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council, it is a foundation to build upon in future years. In next year's state budget, we will be calling on policymakers to continue strengthening the child tax credit to maximize its poverty-fighting potential. While the increased investment in the child tax credit is significant, we must recognize that it only addresses part of the broader challenge of eradicating child poverty in New York

State. Achieving lasting progress requires long-term, sustainable investment to address the root causes of child poverty and ensure meaningful change.

The Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council (CPRAC) has provided a comprehensive roadmap to reduce child poverty by 50% by 2031, grounded in evidence-based recommendations and a vision of economic security for every family. To achieve this historic goal, New York must prioritize the full adoption of these proven solutions to deliver transformative change for New York's children and families.

Read the full statement from the **New York Can End Child Poverty campaign**.

Universal Child Care: Funding for Child Care Assistance Program, but Child Care Investments Continue to Bypass Workforce Investment Needs

We welcome the inclusion of $400 million in additional funds for the Child Care Assistance Program in the final budget. This new investment will help to avert a severe child care assistance shortfall in New York, and keep the promise of achieving universal child care in our state within sight.

We are hopeful that state and local governments will draw down all available new funds, will work swiftly and cooperatively to reopen child care assistance in those counties that have closed enrollment, and will do all they can to ensure enrollment remains open and accessible to eligible families across the state.

Missing from the final budget, however, was any investment in the child care workforce. This marks **t**he first budget since the pandemic without funding for this workforce – among the lowest paid occupations in New York. Stated another way: this budget delivers what amounts to a pay cut to the child care workforce. This comes at a moment when child care programs are already operating under capacity, even while carrying waitlists, because of staffing shortages due to low wages. New York cannot achieve the goal of universal child care if leaders do not invest in the child care workforce. Without a robust early childhood workforce, parents will continue to struggle to not only afford child care, but access it where they live.

Creating a child care system that works is essential to our families, children, providers, and economy. New York State families deserve high-quality, universal child care and every child care educator deserves to earn a thriving wage – we will continue to work toward this vision for New York State.

Read the full statement from the **Empire State Campaign for Child Care**.

Transforming Child Welfare: Budget Lacks Investments in Family-Centered Child Welfare

While the Assembly's budget proposal included an investment in the Communities Helping Improve Lives Daily (CHILD) program, structured to reflect the vision of the proposed Child and Family Wellbeing Fund, the enacted state budget does not include a focused investment in family wellbeing by funding community-led projects that strengthen families, reduce their vulnerability to contact with the child welfare system, and invest in supports that enhance family preservation, reunification, and healing.

We are hopeful that the vision of the Child and Family Wellbeing Fund will become a north star for transforming New York's child welfare system through investments in family and community support networks, guided by community organizations.

Childhood Health and Wellbeing: Early Intervention Funding Missing from Final Budget

The 2025-26 state budget contains no new investments in Early Intervention (EI) and Preschool Special Education programs. New York State's EI program is last in the nation for timely service delivery and puts half of eligible children on wait lists.

Long wait times for services are driven by a shortage of providers, who cannot afford to work for the rates that New York State pays. Last year, Governor Hochul signed into law a rate increase for providers, but providers have not yet seen that increase. For more on EI services in New York State, see the Kids Can't Wait campaign.

About the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy

For more than 150 years, the Schuyler Center has led advocacy rooted in compassion, evidence, and belief that government should work for the greater good. Schuyler Center's work acknowledges the historic racism woven throughout shared systems, and advocates for public policies and investments that seek to address inequities while improving health, welfare, and human services for all New Yorkers, with a focus on children and families experiencing poverty.

Schuyler Center's advocacy has advanced policies that reduce child poverty, build a universal child care system, promote child health and wellbeing, and transform the child welfare system.

Schuyler Center achieves its goals through creative and detailed policy analysis, coalition building, and advocacy with elected officials, agency executives, policymakers, and stakeholders. Learn more at https://scaany.org

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