



## Child and Family Wellbeing Action Network 2026 Policy Priorities

---

[The Child and Family Wellbeing Action Network \(CFWAN\)](#) is a statewide group of advocates, providers, and people impacted by New York’s child welfare system. We are working towards a vision of New York where the state prioritizes investing in and implementing policies that strengthen and support children, youth, and families.

For New York to start realizing that vision, we urge state leaders to:

1. **Establish a Child and Family Wellbeing Fund at \$30 million** to ensure New York invests in trusted supports provided by and for community members.
2. **Fund the Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYCSI) at \$10 million.** Ensure this hugely successful and growing program can fully support all young people with foster care experience who are navigating college, including a new class of first-year students, and additional students as outreach expands.
3. **Invest in high-quality legal representation** by:
  - a. Funding early high-quality legal representation (timely defense) for families involved in Child Protective Services with \$50 million; and
  - b. Investing \$165 million for specialized legal support for young people and families subject to immigration enforcement.

Timely access to high-quality legal representation is critical for ensuring families can stay together and gain access to supportive resources.

4. **Pass Family Miranda Rights: A.1234 (Walker)/S.551 (Brisport).** Require caseworkers to advise parents and caregivers of their rights at first contact.
5. **Pass the Maternal Health, Dignity and Consent Act: A.860 (Rosenthal)/S.845 (Salazar).** Require medical providers to seek the informed consent of pregnant people and new mothers before they or their babies are drug tested.

At the same time, we look forward to partnering with state leaders to develop and advance the following initiatives to better support New York’s children and families:

- Change New York’s definition of neglect to ensure families are not swept up in the child welfare system simply because they are experiencing poverty.
- Provide guaranteed income to young people exiting the system and families involved in the system.
- Require OCFS, SUNY and CUNY to post signage of higher education funding opportunities and their eligibility requirements, including FYCSI, available to youth with a foster care background: A.5658 (Zinerman)/S.378 (Brouk).

- Prohibit automatically referring parents of children who enter foster care to child support collection: A.1036 (Kim)/S.3660 (Hoylman-Sigal).
- Reduce child poverty with attention to racial equity by strengthening the Empire State Child Credit.
- Increase the availability of community-based services, especially mental and behavioral health.
- Reduce the number of children and youth placed in congregate settings.
- Prohibit state and local agencies and employees from engaging in federal immigration enforcement, sharing personal information with immigration authorities, or cooperating with immigration authorities unless presented with a valid judicial warrant: A.3506 (Reyes)/S.2235 (Gounardes).
- Raise new revenue to fill budget shortfalls and invest in New York's children, young people, and families.

*February 2026*