

March 9, 2026

Governor Kathy Hochul  
Executive Chamber  
NYS Capitol  
Albany, NY 11248

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins  
Senate Majority Leader  
907 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12247

Assemblymember Carl E. Heastie  
Speaker of the Assembly  
932 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12248

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

As a diverse group of organizations working to improve immediate and long-term outcomes for children and families, we write to urge you to protect New York's immigrant children and families by passing New York for All ([S.2235A](#) Gounardes/[A.3506A](#) Reyes), investing \$175 million in immigration legal services, and enacting the Access to Representation Act (ARA) ([A.270](#) Cruz) and the Building Up Immigrant Legal Defense (BUILD) Act ([S.4538](#) Liu/[A.2689](#) Cruz) this legislative session.

Approximately [37.5% of New York children](#)—more than 1,406,000 children—live in immigrant families, and an estimated [324,400 children across New York State](#) live with an undocumented family member. All are at risk of experiencing family separation due to sweeping non-targeted federal immigration enforcement actions. The impacts of family separation on children can be devastating, resulting in long-term health and psychological effects. The detention or deportation of a caregiver can also cause families to experience significant income loss and, in the most acute cases, can result in children entering the foster care system.

Just the fear of being swept up in immigration enforcement actions is harmful. The chilling effect of intensified enforcement results in fewer families accessing the programs and benefits for which they are eligible, with harmful ripple effects for children's health, nutrition, early learning, and wellbeing. For children to grow, learn, and thrive, their caregivers and families must be able to participate freely in their communities—to work, attend school, engage in community life, and access public programs—without fear of immigration enforcement.

**New York State has the power to protect our immigrant children and families by passing New York for All—which would prevent New York state and local agencies and personnel from engaging in any federal immigration enforcement activity except what is explicitly required by governing federal law—and ensure all New Yorkers swept up in immigration enforcement have access to legal services. New York's children—regardless of**

**immigration status—deserve to grow up free from the fear of family separation. It is time for New York to take bold, concrete action to protect them—this year, without delay.**

## **New York for All**

The New York for All Act ([S.2235A](#) Gounardes/[A.3506A](#) Reyes) would direct state and local officials to refrain from engaging in any federal immigration law enforcement activity or from sharing sensitive information with federal immigration authorities, except as explicitly required by governing federal law. The Act would also prohibit federal immigration officers from entering non-public areas of state and local property without a judicial warrant. By creating a clear distinction between New York State and municipal personnel and programs on the one hand, and federal immigration enforcement on the other, this legislation will help alleviate the fear that many immigrants live with every day, fear that leaves many afraid to interact with government at any level—including public schools or county social services—and allow them to care for their families and participate fully in our communities and seek the benefits they may need.

Notably, the Governor has proposed legislation that would offer some of the protections included in New York for All, but it does not go far enough. Among the [shortcomings](#) of the Governor's proposal, local governments would still be allowed to engage in federal immigration law enforcement activity (just not in the context of the 287-g agreement), and federal immigration agents would still be able to enter many non-public areas of many state and local government locations, including the DMV and social services agencies.

## **Immigration Legal Services: \$175 Million, the ARA, and the BUILD Act**

Passing New York for All is essential—but it is not enough. Immigrant New Yorkers who are detained or placed in removal proceedings urgently need access to legal representation. Unlike in criminal proceedings, immigrants facing deportation have no guaranteed right to an attorney, meaning that parents, caregivers, and community members are forced to navigate a complex legal system alone—all too often leading directly to detention and deportation, and to devastating family separations. Data show that immigrants without legal representation are far more likely to be detained or deported than those with representation. Specifically, according to a [national survey and analysis](#), non-detained individuals without legal representation were 2.5 times more likely to be removed than those with representation; among detained individuals, those without representation were **10.5 percentage points more likely** to be ordered removed than those with legal representation.

To address this, we urge the State to do the following:

- Invest \$175 million in immigration legal services via the Office for New Americans to sustain existing programs and stand up critical new programs.
- Pass the Access to Representation Act (A.270), which would provide any income-eligible New Yorker facing legal challenges relating to their immigration status—including parents and caregivers who are the bedrock of their children's lives—the right

to ongoing legal representation. Administered through the New York State Office for New Americans, the ARA would establish clear standards for quality representation, provide for oversight and data collection, and create accountability mechanisms to ensure that the right to counsel is a reality, not just a promise.

- Pass the Building Up Immigrant Legal Defense (BUILD) Act (S.4538/A.2689), which would establish a competitive grant program to build the workforce and infrastructure needed to deliver the right to counsel at scale. Grants would support workforce recruitment and training, linguistically appropriate legal services, technical assistance, community navigator services, retention strategies to address burnout and equitable compensation, expanded capacity in rural and underserved communities, and physical and technological infrastructure. Crucially, the BUILD Act directs that services be provided regardless of a person's ability to pay, prior contact with the criminal legal system, or the perceived strength of their legal case—ensuring that no family is turned away.

Together, these investments and legislative actions would ensure that no immigrant New Yorker—no parent, no caregiver, no child—is forced to face the immigration legal system alone.

Keeping families together is not only a moral imperative; it is a sound investment in the health, stability, and future of New York's children. We urge State leaders to meet this moment. Now is the time to ensure that New York State is the best place for all families, regardless of immigration status, to live, work, play, learn, and grow.

Sincerely,

**Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy**

211 New York Inc.

All Our Kin

Alliance for Quality Education

Arab American Family Support Center

Asian American Federation

Black Child Development Institute - New York State

CAMBA Legal Services

Catholic Charities New York

CASA-NYC

Center for Montessori Education |NY Inc.

Child Care Council of Suffolk, Inc.

Children's Defense Fund - New York

Children's Rights

Chinese-American Planning Council

Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)

Dads for All

DAY ONE Early Learning Community Inc.

Early Care & Learning Council

ECE on the Move  
Empire Justice Center  
Empire State Campaign for Child Care  
Equity Advocates  
FPWA  
Families Together in New York State  
Gema's Childcare  
Good+ Foundation  
Hunger Solutions New York  
Immigrant Resources Volunteer Network of St. Lawrence County  
Korean Community Services of Metropolitan of New York, Inc.  
La Red de Pueblos Trasnacionales/Transnational Villages Network  
Lawyers For Children  
Liftoff WNY  
Literacy in Community (LINC)  
LiveOn NY  
National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)  
New York Association for the Education of Young Children  
New York Civil Liberties Union  
New York State Council of Churches  
New York State Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services  
New York State Montessori Alliance  
New York State Network for Youth Success  
Northern Rivers  
Part of the Solution (POTS)  
PowHer NY Network  
RMAPI (Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative)  
Show Up Long Island  
Staten Island Inter-Religious Leadership  
The Children's Agenda  
The Innovative Daycare Corp  
The Legal Aid Society  
The Red Door Place  
United Neighborhood Houses  
United Way of New York City  
United Way of New York State  
Unlocal  
WNY Child Care Action Team  
WNY Women's Foundation  
Westchester Children's Association  
Westchester Justice for Families

cc: Senator Andrew Gounardes  
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Karen Persichilli Keogh, Secretary to the Governor  
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