Child and Family Wellbeing Action Network
2026-2027 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. **Pass the Supporting Families Together Act: A.9283-A (Hevesi)/S.8602-A (Salazar).** Remove the civil and criminal penalties tied to mandated reporting.
4. **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.
5. **Pass the Economic Justice for Kids in Foster Care Act: A.8036-A (Hevesi)/(Brisport).** Require Local Social Services Districts to use and conserve all federal benefits on behalf of kids in foster care.

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:

- Provide guaranteed income to young people exiting the system and families involved in the system.
- 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.
- Require caseworkers to advise parents and caregivers of their rights at first contact: Family Miranda Rights, A.1234 (Walker)/S.551 (Brisport).
- 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).
- 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.
- Raise new revenue to fill budget shortfalls and invest in New York's children, young people, and families.

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