

Children and Family Services

Child Care

The Executive proposal includes combined federal, State and local funding of \$540 million for the child care block grant. This reflects a net increase of \$7 million in federal funding from SFY 2007-08. The Executive however, does not provide for a direct transfer of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds for child care subsidies as was provided in SFY 2007-08 at \$366 million. Instead, the Executive recommends increasing the flexible funds for family services to \$1.01 billion from the current \$654 million, from which local districts may request additional support for child care.

The Assembly believes in the importance of quality child care. This provides a critical foundation for the educational and social development of children in the State. Working families also rely on child care that enables them to pursue employment and secure their economic future.

Testimony at Assembly hearings gave evidence of the challenges faced by the State's current child care system. The issues include: affordability and access to financial assistance that helps to reduce the cost of care for the family; administrative barriers such as parental co-payment requirements that often exceed the cost of care and the requirement to pursue child support orders in order to obtain child care subsidies; availability of care during non-traditional hours; a shortage of infant

child care slots; and the challenge of transporting children from half-day prekindergarten to child care when the pre-K day has ended.

Advocates provided a list of steps that would improve New York's child care provider network. These include: better recruitment, retention and training of child care workers, additional funding for more low-income child care subsidies, an increase in the number and types of providers, and a quality rating system.

The State's fiscal commitment to child care has grown to over \$900 million in combined federal, State, and local government funding in the current fiscal year. The Legislature also authorized spending up to \$500,000 in the current fiscal year to support costs associated with data collection but this report has not been produced. The Assembly believes that this is an important starting point, for it provides the foundation for a discussion that will result in the development and implementation of informed policies that more appropriately respond to the concerns of parents and providers.