



## **Joint Legislative Public Hearing on 2016-2017 Executive Budget Proposal: Workforce Development**

Submitted by  
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Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and input on Governor Cuomo's proposed budget for New York State. The Early Care & Learning Council is a statewide, not-for-profit organization, whose mission is to promote excellence in early care and education with equal access for all families. We do this primarily through the support of, and in partnership with, a strong network of community-based organizations that provide Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) services.

According to the Committee for Economic Development, there are 3,502,059 children under the age of 15 in New York who may require paid child care services. The Committee states "business and the economy as a whole gain a more productive work force when employees feel confident that their children are secure and learning. And society as a whole benefits when more families are self-sufficient and the next generation of citizens is well

prepared for its adult responsibilities.”<sup>1</sup> Access to the organized child care market can increase labor force participation and support state and regional economic growth.

High-quality, affordable child care can help parents balance work and family responsibilities. Studies show that providing better access to and lowering the cost of high-quality care can significantly increase mother’s employment rates and incomes. This increase in family income has been shown to improve children’s outcomes as well. Access to quality early childhood education programs can strengthen parent’s attachment to the labor force and increase their earnings potential by providing a safe and nurturing environment that furthers the education and development that parents are providing at home.

Children’s early experiences create the foundation for all future learning, behavior and health. In New York, the responsibility of school readiness is shared among an early childhood system that includes families, professionals and the community with an exceptionally strong connection to local communities through a network of Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&Rs) agencies that serve every county, coordinated by the Early Care & Learning Council in Albany.

According to an analysis released by the White House Council of Economic Advisers, Early childhood education can boost children’s earnings later in life. Long-term analyses suggest that early childhood education can increase earnings in adulthood by 1.3 to 3.5 percent.<sup>2</sup> Libby Ethridge, President of the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators, stated children who attend early-learning programs demonstrate higher levels of school achievement and better social adjustment than those who have no formal early education. They’re less likely to repeat a grade or be placed in special education classes, since learning issues can be identified and mediated early.<sup>3</sup>

Steve Barnett, Director of the National Institute for Early Education Research, a lack of early education experiences has a negative impact on the entire country; economically and

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<sup>1</sup> Riberio, R. & Warner, M. “Measuring the Regional Economic Importance of Early Care and Education.” The Cornell Methodology Guide, January 2004, page 13. <http://s3.amazonaws.com/mildredwarner.org/attachments/000/000/035/original/78-e7a72463.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> “The Economics of Early Childhood Investments.” December 2014. [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/early\\_childhood\\_report1.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/early_childhood_report1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Skarda, Erin. “How Can We Fix Early Childhood Education?” Moving America Forward, July 2004. <http://nationswell.com/ask-experts-can-fix-early-childhood-education/>

socially. Barnett states “we pay for failing to invest in our kids in terms of the high cost of school failure; one in 10 middle-income kids failed a grade and will repeat, and one in 10 doesn’t complete high school.”

Given the role that child care plays in our communities, it is essential that during this time of economic recovery we protect vital child care programs. In the face of additional budget cuts, constituents are relying on their communities to advocate for the continued need for available and affordable high quality care. They are depending on your support of New York’s child care community. Investing in quality child care initiatives helps both our economy and our children succeed in the long run.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2014, about 43 percent of all families included children under age 18. Among the 34.4 million families with children, 88.7 percent had at least one employed parent in 2014. Among married-couple families with children, 96.6 percent had at least one employed parent in 2014. The share of married-couple families with children where both parents worked was 60.2 percent.

The United States is the only high income nation not to have paid family leave, while almost all middle to low income countries offer it to families. Studies show that early bonding with parents, lays the foundation for children to have good long-term health and overall well-being. Mothers in particular who are not offered paid family leave, are more likely to give up breastfeeding earlier, delay infant immunizations, experience financial hardship, and experience postpartum depression. Paid family leave doesn't just benefit Mom and baby's health, it also improves the likelihood that Mom will return to work. According to the National Partnership for Women and Children, “first-time mothers who take paid leave tend to leave work earlier in their pregnancies and return to work later after childbirth than those who are able to take paid leave for the birth of a child.” Women who are able to remain at home during Paid Family leave, are able to set up routines for their new infant, setting them up for success upon returning to work.

The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 was an important accomplishment providing unpaid, job-protected leave to recover from a serious illness, care for a new child, or care for a

seriously ill spouse, parent, or child, yet only half of all workers in the United States are covered and eligible. In order to qualify, a worker must have been employed for at least 12 months and worked a minimum of 1,250 hours during that time for an employer with at least 50 employees within a 75-mile radius—which automatically excludes about half of all workers.<sup>4</sup>

As the New York State government plans for the future, we look forward to the further development of a system that supports both children and families to succeed in the global economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments to you.

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<sup>4</sup> Glynn, Sarah Jane. "Fact Sheet: Paid Family and Medical Leave, Updated Labor Standards Could Help U.S. Workers Make Ends Meet." August 2012. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/labor/news/2012/08/16/11980/fact-sheet-paid-family-and-medical-leave/>