



Testimony of Day Care Council of New York
At the New York State FY 2021-2022 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Human Services
Honorable Liz Krueger, Chair, Senate Committee on Finance
Honorable Helene, Weinstein, Chair, Assembly Committee on Ways & Means

Presented by Gregory Brender Director of Public Policy

February 9th, 2021

Good Afternoon Chair Krueger and Chair Weinstein and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Gregory Brender and I am here on behalf of the Day Care Council of New York. For more than 70 years, the Day Care Council has successfully served the needs of non-profit organizations sponsoring early childhood education programs across the five boroughs of New York City. Our 93 members currently operate more than 216 programs and Day Care Council serves as the lead agency for Child Care Resource and Referral in New York City. Day Care Council is part of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care and Winning Beginning NY and supports the agenda of these coalitions.

Day Care Council and its members who are providing child care in every part of New York City understand that New York cannot recover without stabilizing and strengthening its child care infrastructure. During the pandemic Day Care Council's Child Care Resource and Referral Network experiences a surge of calls from parents seeking child care. And Day Care Council members who operated Emergency Child Care Centers and kept Family Child Care homes open and operating with socially distant practices during the height of the pandemic know what a crucial lifeline affordable child care is for working families.

At the same time, many providers are struggling and even being forced to close their doors. The rapid changes to program and funding models that effectively responding to COVID-19 requires is unprecedented. The pandemic continually increases the demands on community based early childhood education programs in responding to community needs at the same time that it presents meaningful threats to the stability and viability of many longstanding early childhood education providers.

New York must act now, in this budget to stabilize the child care sector.

Therefore, Day Care Council urges New York State to use the FY 2021-2022 budget to make the following investments which provide New York's child care sector the funds necessary to stabilize and begin to rebuild the sector and to lay the foundations for a universal system that serves all New York families that need care, one animated by the emerging recognition that child care is a public good, essential to a healthy economy, and an integral part of a birth to 12 education system:

1. Raise new state revenue if necessary, to make these necessary investments to stabilize the child care industry, and expand access to more families. These are unprecedented times; it is just and appropriate to ask those New Yorkers who have prospered since the pandemic struck to contribute more to the state's recovery.
2. Make no cuts to 2020 funding levels for child care in 2021.
3. Provide counties with \$370 million to make the child care subsidy system more equitable by eliminating unfair eligibility variations across counties and communities, and prioritizing families with the greatest need by: Making child care subsidies available consistently statewide to all income-eligible families who are unemployed and seeking work, retraining, or pursuing higher education; families involved in domestic violence; families receiving preventive child welfare services; foster families; families experiencing homelessness; and children with special needs; Incrementally expand subsidy eligibility to at least 85% of the state median income (beginning with regions with a high cost of living and/or those hit hard by the impacts of the pandemic); Reduce or eliminate parent co-pays for child care subsidies to no more than 10% of income over the federal poverty level in counties that are currently above that level as a step toward ensuring that one day, no New York family pays more than 7% of income for child care; and Pay subsidy to providers for at least 12 absences/quarter per child, plus federal holidays, building toward a system in which subsidy is not paid based on a child's daily attendance, but based on enrollment.
4. Commit to eliminating expulsions and suspensions in child care and pre-K, which disproportionately impact children of color, by setting a state-wide prohibition on suspensions and expulsions (in most cases) while investing at least \$15 million to infant-toddler resource centers to provide child care and pre-K programs the supports they need to meet the developmental, mental health, social-emotional needs of all the children in their care.
5. Invest \$100 million to create a fund to increase workforce compensation to a fair wage and improve child care quality. Priority should be given to programs that serve low-income families and care for infants and toddlers. By investing \$485 million in child care in 2021-22, New York State can extend child care subsidies to an estimated 30,000 additional children each month, lower the cost of care among families receiving support,

and boost child care worker wages to a level more commensurate with their importance to New York's children, families, and communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions and can be reached at gbrender@dcnyinc.org.