



ALL OUR KIN INC

NEWYORK@ALLOURKIN.ORG 917-933-3282 WWW.ALLOURKIN.ORG

Steven Morales - NY Policy Director
All Our Kin, Inc.
Bronx, NY
steven@allourkin.org
718-739-1875

February 2, 2022

Honorable Senators and Members of the Assembly:

My name is Steven Morales and I'm the New York Policy Director at All Our Kin. All Our Kin is a national nonprofit organization that trains, supports, and sustains home-based family child care educators. We have a strong presence in the Bronx, where we work with nearly 300 family child care educators with the capacity to care for over 4,000 children. Our programming enables providers to succeed as business owners and as educators who offer high-quality care to children from birth to age five. We are also members of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care.

I'm here today to talk to you about the need to fully fund child care, including licensed home-based family child care, in the upcoming budget in order to ensure two things: one – that all families who need child care are able to access it, and two – that educators are paid a rate that allows them to sustain their businesses, their employees, and their families for the long-term.

Parents across the state rely on licensed home-based family child care for high-quality, flexible, culturally responsive care. In New York City, 61 percent of licensed child care programs are family or group child care and nearly 6 in 10 infants and toddlers in publicly funded care are in family child care settings.

At the same time, only 24 percent of the City's children from birth to five have access to publicly-funded child care or pre-k. And child care educators across the state are in the bottom 10 percent of wage earners, earning an average of less than \$12 an hour.

But the need to fund family child care goes beyond statistics. I want to share with you some of the stories that I've heard from educators which speak to the urgency of solving our child care crisis:

Beatriz (note: name changed for privacy) who owns a group family child care program in the Edenwald section of the Bronx told me that there are families in her program who have either failed to qualify for subsidies or have spent months waiting for a voucher. Beatriz has several



ALL OUR KIN INC

NEWYORK@ALLOURKIN.ORG 917-933-3282 WWW.ALLOURKIN.ORG

times made the gut-wrenching decision to take money out of her own pocket and provide free care so that these families who could not afford to pay would have a place to send their children. No educator should have to decide between her own livelihood and serving a family in her community. We need to fund universal child care so that no family or educator in New York State is ever faced with this decision.

In addition, Isaura, owner and lead educator of Little Giant's Group Family Day Care in Williamsbridge, talked about how, despite having a full program of private pay and subsidized children, she is unable to pay her staff the wages they deserve. Isaura spoke of staff members who have, despite their love for children, decided to take jobs in retail or fast food so that they could earn higher wages and benefits. Isaura wants to be able to offer healthcare and retirement benefits to her employees – including to her own aging mother who works in her program, but she is simply financially unable to do so with the rates she currently receives from the State. Not only is it difficult for her when there is staff turnover, but Isaura talked about how difficult it was for the children in her care who had to cope with losing a trusted caregiver with whom they had formed strong relationships. No child care educator should have to choose between poverty and leaving their profession. No child should have to lose relationships with their caregivers due to low staff wages and benefits. We need to fund educator compensation that allows for robust, competitive take-home pay and benefits for home-based and center-based educators alike.

Unfortunately, these stories are not unique. Imagine the impact of these stories multiplied by the roughly 9,000 family child care programs and roughly 6,000 child care centers across the state. This is a crisis that is devastating the entire child care sector and threatening our state's economy.

We have the opportunity to solve New York's child care crisis in our state budget by investing significantly in free and available child care for every family who wants it, and in raising compensation for educators so that they can sustain their businesses, receive ample take-home pay and benefits, and provide high quality care for the long term.

When we don't invest in child care our entire state pays the price in the form of lost productivity from parents who can't go to work, lost revenue for businesses, and perhaps most importantly, in missed opportunities to prepare our next generation for success.

We all know the cliché that our budget is a reflection of our values. I urge you to show that New York State values our youngest children and the educators who teach and care for them by dedicating the \$5 billion dollars for child care access and compensation outlined in the Empire State Campaign for Child Care's budget request.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.