



THE LEGISLATURE
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor, New York State
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

February XX, 2021

Dear Governor Hochul,

We, elected officials and organizations representing children and families, believe after decades of budget cuts and withholding funds from critical prevention programs, that now is the time for New York State to invest in the prevention supports that can mitigate the impact of trauma on children and families.

We propose that this year's Final Enacted State Budget include **The Children and Families Reinvestment Act** and centers children, youth, and families in communities, by:

- Infusing funds directly into chronically underfunded prevention and support programs;
- Establishing a new flexible funding stream to support innovative approaches to child wellbeing and position New York as a national leader; and
- Creating a Universal Child Care System

The Children and Families Reinvestment Act is necessary because a proactive approach with meaningful up-front investments will allow us to create a better New York, without recreating the negative consequences that we know will happen as a result of under-investment. We know that childhood trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences ("ACEs") lead to poor health and mental health outcomes, alcohol and substance use, self-harm, suicide, poor educational outcomes including dropping out of high school, housing insecurity and homelessness, incarceration and unemployment. This year's New York State budget cannot allow these ACEs to continue as they have.

As the pandemic drives increased rates of ACEs, including significant increases in parental and caregiver deaths, compromised health, and deepened economic insecurity, we recognize that tens of thousands of New York State's children and youth are now at exponentially greater risk of becoming sick, addicted, unemployed, homeless, and/or incarcerated. In New York State, during the first few months of the pandemic, one in six hundred Black children and one in seven hundred Latinx children lost their parent or caregiver¹. A new study published in *Pediatrics* shows that nearly one in

¹ "COVID-19 Ripple Effect: The Impact of COVID-19 on Children in New York State," United Hospital Fund, Sept. 30, 2020.

every five hundred children in the United States has lost a caregiver, and children of color have been disproportionately affected, with the highest loss of primary caregivers in California, Texas, and New York². Losing a primary or secondary caregiver is associated with a range of negative health effects, including lower self-esteem, a higher risk of suicide, and acts of violence. The same study found that addressing the impact of this level of devastation on children will “require intentional investment to address individual, community, and structural inequalities³.”

In order to recover, we must therefore make an intentional investment in supports that prevent children from experiencing hardship to begin with, mitigate trauma and its impacts, and services that help children to heal and to thrive. In New York State, programs that support children and families have been subject to annual proposals from the previous Governor to cut or eliminate funding for over a decade. While the Legislature has been successful in rejecting many of the former Governor’s proposals, tens of million of dollars have been taken away from programs that serve the most vulnerable children and families.

To undo that damage, we call on New York State to recover from more than a decade of underfunding the State’s commitment and:

1) Pass a Bold State Budget that Centers Children, Youth, and Families by Infusing Funds into Chronically Underfunded Programs.

New York State must:

- Reauthorize child welfare funding (Social Service Law §153-k), which sunsets 6/30/2022, and restore funding for children and family preventative services at the statutorily required 65%/35% reimbursement to counties.
- Fund KinGap outside the Foster Care Block Grant so that overburdened and budget-constrained counties are not forced to choose between spending limited funds on foster care or kinship care, and substantially increase financial supports that help children leave foster care and live with family.
- Increase funding for the NYS Unified Kinship Navigator system of care, expanding access to services and supports for children in kinship families who are not in foster care
- Increase the child welfare housing subsidy to support families and older youth in foster care.
- Provide a stipend increase for foster parents.
- Provide funding for the intensification of salaries for equitable investment in the child welfare workforce.
- Invest in workforce training and education through the [NYS Child Welfare Worker Incentive Scholarship Program](#) and the [NYS Child Welfare Worker Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program](#).

² “About 1 in 515 children in U.S. has lost caregiver because of COVID-19, study estimates,” CBS News, Oct. 7, 2021.

³ “COVID-19-Associated Orphanhood and Caregiver Death in the United States” Pediatrics, Oct. 1, 2021.

- Expand the New York State Child Tax Credit (amending section 606 of the Tax law of 2018).
- Increase funding for, and expand access to, Home Visiting, which is currently serving a very small percentage of all eligible children, so that we can set New York on a path to universal coverage.
- Increase funding for, and expand access to, Advantage Afterschool and other out-of-school time funding streams, setting New York on a path to universal access; and
- Increase funding for, and expand access to, The Youth Development Program, expanding access to services and supports through municipalities to child, youth, and family serving community-based organizations.

In addition to restoring these programs to funding levels that directly correlate to the increased and deepened needs as a result of the pandemic and economic crisis, we must also address a fundamental gap in our childhood trauma prevention and mitigation system in New York State.

Therefore, we call on New York State to:

2) Create a New Child and Family Wellbeing Fund

This fund will create a flexible and innovative funding program to support efforts to respond to children's and families' needs in communities, with avenues for community input and accountability. The fund would invest new State dollars in local projects, such as the following:

- Family Resource/Enrichment Centers (FRCs/FECs) are a "hub" for families to partake in free opportunities specific to their community -- parenting groups, child development activities, and culturally responsive events.
- Help Me Grow (HMG) is a system incorporated into an existing community organization. HMG prioritizes understanding the surrounding community to more effectively make referrals/connections, and to provide resources to families when they need support. HMG is a centralized point for families to receive free, accurate information about child development and parenting tips.
- Triple P (Positive Parenting Partnership) gives families simple strategies to prevent and treat behavioral and emotional issues in children and teenagers.
- New "home grown" models for programs supporting children, youth and families who have contact with the child welfare system and juvenile/criminal legal system, or who are served by multiple systems, including mental health.
- Community driven "whole child" approaches to primary prevention and neighborhood investment in child and family wellbeing.
- Direct cash support for youth and families.

With regard to child welfare services, this new fund would also serve as a pipeline to future federal dollars - including reimbursement under the Federal Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) - by expanding evidence and data collection of prevention programs created to reduce the number of children separated from their parents and placed in foster care.

Finally, we have all been witness to the systemic underfunding and dismantling of child care in New York State. The pinnacle of New York State's abandonment of child care came last year when the

former Governor withheld billions in federal child care dollars from pandemic rescue packages, while hundreds of child care programs closed, many permanently.

Child care is not only necessary for our economic recovery, it strengthens families and benefits children by preventing and mitigating the effects of childhood trauma through resilience building, social connections, and other protective factors for our kids.

We call on New York State to:

3) Create a Universal Child Care System

New York State is currently facing a child care crisis of limited availability and access, and this year's potential infusion of federal funding is creating the perfect opportunity to finally move towards a system of truly universal childcare. Therefore, this year we can and must create a truly universal system, which adapts and builds upon several of the key principles set forth by the Child Care Availability Task Force.

- All children are universally covered.
- Funding for child care will be generous, predictable, consistent, and sustained long term.
- The system supports and properly funds a choice of modalities, including center-based and family-based child care, as well as family allowance options, and generous paid family leave for parents.
- The system promotes respect and just compensation for the child care workforce.
- Child care is available and accessible in all communities.
- Availability is not limited through bureaucratic red tape and burdensome means-testing requirements that inevitably leave the most vulnerable behind.
- All children, regardless of ages or type of setting, have quality care.
- System evaluation and reform is continuous and centered in quality and equity.

The chairs of the Children and Families committees of the New York State Legislature and many of their colleagues have been touring New York State to get input from and the perspectives of the State's child care providers and parents, as well as all relevant stakeholders, and will be introducing legislation that builds upon these experiences and the report of the Child Care Availability Task Force.

In addition to the urgency for establishing accessible and equitable Universal Child Care, these conversations have made clear that New York State must reconcile the impact of Pre-Kindergarten on the child care system. These systems must be aligned, and not operate in competition with each other. Only then will we best serve families and children across our State.

Thus, we support our colleagues in their effort to fully fund the Statewide Universal Full-Day Pre-K ("SUFDPK") program for districts outside of New York City. In addition, we call on New York State to: (1) establish a state-level body that is charged with planning and coordinating child care and Pre-K policies; (2) design a new rate-setting methodology for Pre-K special education programs and open preschool special education classes for children in integrated settings (known as "SCIS");

(3) establish Regional Technical Assistance Centers and increase the percentage of Pre-K slots in community-based organizations; (4) facilitate early childhood/child care programs contracting with school districts to provide Pre-K; (5) extend the study plan option to expand the Pre-K workforce; (6) combine state and federal Pre-K funding into a single source; and (7) develop a statewide or regional enrollment system that facilitates enrollment in all funded child care and Pre-K programs.

As this year's New York State budget is negotiated, we ask that you engage with and incorporate the ideas set forth in this letter that have been developed with meaningful input from advocates, child care providers, parents, and local administrators.

New York State's children and families can come back stronger post-pandemic if we make the necessary investments in their future. We are resolved to provide this foundation, to ensure that our children are not doomed or defined by the trauma inflicted upon them. We believe that the provisions outlined in the **Children and Families Reinvestment Act** including a child and family-centered budget, a new fund for investment in local expertise and innovative community support, and a dedicated focus on child care, is the answer.

Sincerely,



Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi 28th A.D.
Chair, Committee on Children and Families



Senator Jabari Brisport, 25th S.D.
Chair, Committee on Children and Families

Assemblywoman Sarah Clark, 136th A.D.
Assemblywoman Jennifer Lunsford, 135th A.D.
Assemblywoman Michaelle Solages, 22nd A.D.
Assemblywoman Amy Paulin, 88th A.D.
Assemblywoman Stefani Zinerman, 56th A.D.
Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo, 123rd A.D.
Assemblywoman Mathylde Frontus, 46th A.D.
Assemblywoman Jessica González-Rojas, 34th A.D.
Assemblyman Demond Meeks, 137th A.D.
Assemblywoman Kimberly Jean-Pierre, 11th A.D.
Assemblywoman Anna Kelles, 125th A.D.
Assemblyman John T. McDonald III, 108th A.D.
Assemblywoman Karines Reyes, 87th A.D.
Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez, 80th A.D.
Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowtiz, 45th A.D.
Assemblyman Charles Lavine, 13th A.D.
Assemblyman Harry Bronson, 138th A.D.
Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon, 52nd A.D.
Assemblyman Charles Barron, 60th A.D.

Senator Jessica Ramos, 13th S.D.
Senator Jeremy Cooney, 56th A.D.
Senator Alessandra Biaggi, 34th S.D.
Senator Gustavo Rivera, 33rd S.D.
Senator Brad Hoylman, 27th S.D.
Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick, 38th S.D.
Senator Julia Salazar, 18th S.D.
Senator Leroy Comrie, 14th S.D.
Senator John Liu, 11th S.D.
Senator James Sanders, Jr., 10th S.D.
Senator Kevin Parker, 21st S.D.
Senator Robert Jackson, 31st S.D.
Senator Luis R. Sepúlveda, 32nd S.D.

Assemblyman Khaleel Anderson, 31st A.D.
Assemblywoman Rebecca Seawright, 76th A.D.
Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon, 119th A.D.
Assemblywoman Marcela Mitaynes, 51st A.D.
Assemblywoman Phara Souffrant Forrest, 57th A.D.
Assemblyman Zohran Mamdani, 36th A.D.
Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein, 48th A.D.
Assemblywoman Maritza Davila, 53rd A.D.
Assemblyman Michael Benedetto, 82nd A.D.
Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther, 100th A.D.
Assemblywoman Monica Wallace, 143rd A.D.
Assemblywoman Karen McMahan, 146th A.D.
Assemblyman Patrick Burke, 142nd A.D.
Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan, 37th A.D.
Assemblywoman Amanda Septimo, 84th A.D.
Assemblywoman Latrice Walker, 42nd A.D.
Assemblyman Richard Gottfried, 75th A.D.
Assemblyman Charles Fall, 61st A.D.
Assemblyman Kenny Burgos, 85th A.D.
Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner, 113th A.D.
Assemblyman Fred Thiele, 1st A.D.

Alliance for Quality Education (AQE)
Alliance of New York State YMCAs
Association of NYS Youth Bureaus
Citizens' Committee for Children
Children's Defense Fund-New York
COFCCA
Families Together in New York State
NYS Alliance of Boys and Girls Club
NYS Kinship Navigator
ParentChild+
Prevent Child Abuse New York
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
The Children's Agenda
The New York State Court Appointed Special Advocates Association (CASA)
YMCA of Greater New York