



Testimony of Jasmin Norford: Jumpstart for Young Children  
Submitted to the New York State 2023 Joint Legislative Budget  
Hearing: Human Services  
February 13th, 2022

**Chair Weinstein, Chair Krueger, and members of the Assembly Ways and Means and Senate Finance Committees, I am honored to submit the following testimony on behalf of Jumpstart for Young Children to urge further protections for families of early learners and the early education and care (EEC) sector as part of a comprehensive Human Services budget.**

[Jumpstart](#) envisions a world in which every child has the opportunity to thrive. To achieve this vision, we have worked for nearly 30 years to advance equitable learning outcomes for young children in underserved communities by recruiting and supporting caring adults to deliver high-quality programming to children while driving systems change through teaching, advocacy, and leadership. With our focus on training college students interested in education and care, we are committed to ensuring our students enter a robust EEC sector. Beyond advocating for future educators and care professionals, we recognize that providing quality academic environments, rich with opportunities for play and social-emotional development, is integral to a [thriving economy](#) which ensures families, particularly women, have opportunities to remain in the workplace while providing nurturing environments for their children.

Governor Hochul's [executive budget proposal](#) has outlined a pathway to significant progress for children and families. Her proposal projects an expansion of childcare to 500,000 New York children, increases the number of eligible families by increasing income eligibility to 85% of the State Median Income, and decreases administrative barriers to care through the statewide electronic application. We are encouraged by this potential to increase access and ease in obtaining care. **Despite these necessary and positive steps, the budget does not provide the public investment required to stabilize the complex multi-modal network of public, private, and community-based care providers.** The early education field remains in [crisis](#). The EEC workforce is one of the most undercompensated in the general economy, and even among other human service professions, with New York care professionals making less than 97% of other professions in the state. New York EEC providers are struggling to remain afloat amid inflation, to tackle a persistent decline in student enrollment, to make appropriate accommodations and maintain quality services, and ultimately, have been left without guidance for serving an increasing population of children at various stages of the immigration and asylum process in need of care.

Our charge for protecting families is clear, as outlined in the [New York Executive Law §991](#) for human services supporting families:

- “Families deserve a realistic level of **economic security**.”
- Families benefit from “**flexible, accessible and comprehensive** services which are delivered in a manner which is **culturally and linguistically sensitive** to their needs.”
- Families need support from a workforce that “must receive **professional recognition, support and appropriate compensation**.”

The EEC field is charged with creating these nurturing, responsive, and culturally reflective spaces, and yet is not fully equipped with the resources necessary to live up to this responsibility. Our sector cannot survive without the investment needed to create a complete shift in our compensation model that [accounts for the true cost of quality care](#). During this budget cycle, we can make both short-term and

long-term investments that will set our state on the path to a stable and universal child care infrastructure that stimulates the economy, retains qualified educators, and includes children excluded from care.

We urge the following inclusions to ensure the equity outlined in State law is reflected in this year's executive budget:

**1. Ensure that child care exists for ALL children, with specific protections for families excluded due to immigration status.**

To [meet the needs of a growing](#) population of immigrant children and families across NY state, we need a care infrastructure that ensures access for all children, including an increasing population of asylum-seeking families. New York City began funding all children's inclusion in early education through the Promise NYC fund. However, with the discontinuation of these funds in the 2024 city budget and with the minimal protection they offer for those excluded from childcare assistance, the State must ensure immigration status is not a barrier to care. While we continue to call on direct implementation guidance from OCFS and DOE to ensure providers have the tools and resources to support incoming families, we must supplement this guidance with financial assistance to income-eligible families excluded solely based on immigration status. Similar to funding secured during the pandemic that supported workers excluded from temporary financial assistance, which recognized the necessity of immigrant workers to the economy and sustainability of our state, **we recommend an inclusion of \$60 million for a Childcare Assistance fund** that would help protect and sustain families at any stage in the immigration process.

**2. Ensure that the State's plan for child care expansion is sustainable by supporting the early education workforce.**

The executive budget's current proposal of \$398 million insufficiently addresses the present reality of our sector's workforce crisis. While the Governor's plan will expand the umbrella of children we will serve, this work cannot be sustained with the recruitment and retention issues impacting child care providers and staff. Children and families need assured consistency in their educators which cannot be secured without a transformation in compensation. At current subsidy and reimbursement rates and with low student enrollment, providers cannot afford to increase salaries without support. We recommend investment in an interim solution to protect and sustain the sector amidst our current crisis, while committing the State to the research and funding necessary to create a new system of compensation and an accurate cost-of-care model for the future of child care. Thus, **we are calling for a direct short term investment in the child care workforce of [\\$1.2B, including, \\$ 1 Billion](#) for a workforce compensation fund**, helping to immediately increase educators' salaries to a living wage, with an additional \$ 190 million to ensure that an increase to a living wage prohibits a health insurance benefits cliff.

**3. Support economic opportunity.**

Beyond quality spaces of care and learning, children and families need the economic support required to thrive. Economic support through federal stimulus and the child tax credit were valuable tools that ensured basic necessities for many New York [families](#) during and post-pandemic. We support the proposal outlined in the [Children and Families Reinvestment Act \(CFRA\)](#), particularly strengthening New York's Empire State Child Credit to support working families.

We believe that this budget cycle gives a unique opportunity to protect children and families while building the foundation vital for adjusting to a more stable and equitable system for children's services. For more information on our comprehensive budget ask or the full sector solutions necessary for sustaining and transforming the early education community, please [see our session budget priorities](#) outlined by the Empire State Campaign for Childcare (ESCCC) and [our previous testimony offered to the](#)



[Joint Committee on Children and Families](#). We are honored to offer this testimony as an opportunity to encourage a stronger focus on the early learning sector in the final executive budget.

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