



**ParentChild+ Testimony to
The Human Services Budget Committee of Children and Families**

**Submitted by ParentChild+
in Partnership with the NY State Home Visiting Coalition
February, 13th 2023**

Good day: My name is Andre Eaton, and I am the New York State Director for ParentChild+.

ParentChild+ is so honored to be part of this year's state budget. The \$200,000 in FY22 is a start on expanding our programming in communities with waiting lists and which are child care deserts. Our work with families builds quality parent-child interaction, significantly increases children's school readiness, decreases their need for special education services as they move through school, and improves their school performance. Our work with home-based providers improves the quality of the interaction in the care environment, increases parent-child interaction at home, decreases home screen time, and builds children's school readiness skills.

With this year's support from New York State, ParentChild+ is expanding on our services in Onondaga County, the Bronx, and the Capital Region. These communities have historically had limited early childhood, parent support, and school readiness programming available. ParentChild+ is requesting a reappropriation of the \$200,000 with additional funding of and \$300,000 in FY24 for a total request of \$500,00. With the additional \$300,000 ParentChild+ could expand into additional underserved communities, reaching an additional 100 to 200 families across the state. We are particularly interested in expanding our work in child care deserts in the western part of the state.

ParentChild+'s unique focus is on providing parents and home-based child care providers with the knowledge, skills, and materials they need to engage in quality adult-child interaction and positive parenting and support the creation of home learning environments that foster children's school readiness – their language, literacy, numeracy, cognitive, and social-emotional skills. In doing this work, we also guide families in identifying and accessing quality child care settings, planning their children's next educational steps, and supporting their children's continued academic progress. Our partners in this work in New York State include school districts, public libraries, social service and child care agencies, literacy programs, community health centers, immigrant aid organizations, and community-based organizations. Focusing on parenting, school readiness, and early literacy supports for families and caregivers in communities challenged by poverty, isolation, limited education, and language and literacy barriers, ParentChild+ provided over 46,000 home visits and distributed over 23,000 books & educational toys in New York State last year with support from our private and public partners in 11 counties across the state.

Before children enter pre-k or kindergarten, most children living in communities furthest from opportunity and children from immigrant families and families with home languages other than English are cared for by family members or in informal care settings. These caregivers are the least likely to have access to the information, materials, and activities that will enable them to build the school readiness of the children in their care and ensure these children have the skills they need to enter a classroom prepared to be successful students. The funding provided by New York this year is critical to ensuring that families have the support they need to prepare their children to succeed in school, through both ParentChild+'s one-on-one and Home-Based Child Care home visiting models. These models provide a tapestry of support for the adults in young children's lives in the critical years before they enter school, working with parents, foster parents, grandparents and both licensed family child care and family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.

ParentChild+ provides critical learning tools, books, and other educational, interaction-stimulating materials, to families and caregivers raising two- and three-year-olds. ParentChild+ supports building literacy, language, and interaction-rich home environments. Families participate in two visits a week with an early learning specialist, or home visitor, who introduces the materials to the family, and coaches parents on healthy child development and building language, social-emotional, and early literacy and numeracy skills. ParentChild+ staff also connect families to other important social service supports and community resources and assist parents in planning for their children's next educational step, registering their children for a pre-k or Head Start program, while also supporting the parents' educational and/or life goals. ParentChild+ home visiting staff are critical, regular, trusted, through 92 twice-weekly visits, supports in parents' lives.

The ParentChild+ Home-based child care model provides similar supports to family child care providers and family, friend, and neighbor caregivers caring for children in low-income communities. Home-based child care is the most common form of child care for 0–3-year-olds in historically marginalized communities – it is accessible, involves caregivers who speak families' home languages, and is available at the hours that parents need to work, often not the typical 9-5 day and frequently with shifts that change regularly. Through twice weekly visits with providers during the day while children are in care, ParentChild+ early learning specialists support providers in building learning and interaction-rich care environments and support their group management skills and age-differentiated activities. They collaborate with providers on family engagement and support both the care and home environments by providing high quality books that both stay with the provider and go home with the children, tips for both providers and parents, and other learning materials. The ripple effect is powerful as each of the providers will go on to bring these quality interactions and school readiness skills to other children and families in their care in future years. This work with formal and informal caregivers enables us to reach families who are not able to be a part of our one-on-one home visiting model, because they work long and often irregular hours.

The pandemic forced all of us to change the way we interact with each other socially and forced ParentChild+ to adjust the way we provide services, especially to families in the most vulnerable communities. We pivoted from in-home visits to both virtual and hybrid visits using tablets and

phones and ensuring WIFI access and data plans. We made that change immediately as the virus began to spread across the city and around the state, families did not miss a visit and were able to stay in the program and complete it. In addition, our families and our work sit in the midst of the ongoing struggle against racism and social injustice in our cities, the state, and the nation. The pandemic has further highlighted the educational, social, and economic disparities experienced particularly by Black and brown families in this country. As these dual pandemics highlighted the extent of the disparities and depth of their impact on children and families, ParentChild+ elevated and recommitted its work against racism and injustice, taking a deep look across its entire organization and partnerships to ensure it is providing the best and most equitable services to all the children, families, and staff with whom we work. As the pandemic has slowed, but other community challenges, like gun violence, have continued and in some cases worsened, we continue to ensure that all families can access the program by offering virtual and hybrid visit options as we have pivoted back to primarily in-person supports.

We have implemented our four-pillar approach across our work. This framework focused on bringing about equity for young children and families is an organizational commitment to:

- 1) **Strengthen families, caregivers, and the parents of ParentChild+ children by providing services where they live and embedding supports in their communities.**
- 2) **Build trust and respect by providing families and caregivers the best tools and educational resources to prepare the children in their care for educational success and a better future.**
- 3) **Facilitate deep community connections with all our public and nonprofit partners so that families' needs are always upfront and met.**
- 4) **Continue to prioritize caregiver-child interaction as critical to all children's healthy development and wellbeing.**

We look forward to working with New York State and the Office of Children and Family Services to expand this critical continuum of services for young children and their families and caregivers. Thank you so much for allowing me this time to present ParentChild+'s critical school readiness and family support work.