



TESTIMONY
2024-25 JOINT LEGISLATIVE
BUDGET HEARING
HUMAN SERVICE
January 31, 2024

Written testimony submitted by [Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance](#) at [Adirondack Foundation](#)

INTRODUCTION

The [Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance](#) at [Adirondack Foundation](#) appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony to the 2024-25 Joint Budget Hearing on Human Services.

Our written testimony is the collaborative work of our members reflecting the expertise and experience of early childhood educators, family support providers, regional child care resource and referral agencies, health care and early intervention providers and agencies, businesses, municipalities, and families. Founded in 2015, the Alliance connects a network of public and private programs that provide services to young children and their families sources, making it easier for providers and parents to find needed resources. We provide a forum for organizations and individuals committed to this work to share best practices, identify funding opportunities, and discuss and work together to solve common challenges. At the same time, our relationships across the region help us identify gaps, bridge services, and leverage community resources to improve early childhood services in our rural region.

The Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance at Adirondack Foundation appreciates the opportunity to share with you our perspective on the 2024-25 Executive budget and recommendations for improving services for children and families in the Adirondacks.

Empire State Campaign for Child Care (ESCCC)

The Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance is a coalition partner with the Empire State Campaign for Child Care. We are active members in the campaign's advocacy agenda and would like to amplify their 2024-25 Budget and Legislative Agenda. (Linked [HERE](#))

Specifically, the Alliance would like to highlight two recommendations included in the campaign's agenda: (1) create a permanent state child care fund to increase child care worker compensation; and (2) provide funding to support the decoupling of child care assistance from the parent's exact work hours (S.5327A/A.4986 of 2022).

New York must recognize that without a healthy and robust child care workforce we will fail to meet our regional and statewide economic goals. Child care workers are needed to ensure access in our most urban and rural areas. Without access to child care, assistance goes unutilized and our local businesses and employers will continue to struggle to find help.

Decoupling child care assistance from the parent's exact work hours supports the whole family and helps to sustain child care programs. We need families to want to work and live in the Adirondack region. Our geography is diverse and expansive. Decoupling assistance allows parents to manage their lives – go to doctor appointments, job interviews, grocery shops, etc. - without worrying about who is going to care for their child. It would also provide more stable funding for the programs. This commonsense approach helps families thrive and helps to sustain programs.

INCREASE ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE

CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL Agencies (CCR&Rs)

Child care resource and referral agencies are community based not-for-profit organizations dedicated to the support of child care. Embedded in our communities, CCR&Rs are uniquely positioned to provide support to new and existing child care providers and assist families in identifying programs. CCR&Rs are stretched to their limits working without an increase in base funding for over ten years. *The Alliance strongly encourages the state's ongoing support and expansion of CCR&Rs.*

The Alliance appreciates the Executive Budget's recognition of the importance of Infant Toddler Mental Health Consultants. This initiative recognizes the increased need for and importance of child care programs to be supported as they provide nurturing and responsive caregiving, prompt identification of developmental and behavioral challenges, and timely referral of services. *The Alliance strongly supports the Early Care & Learning Council's request to increase the number of Infant Toddler Mental Health Consultants statewide.*

QUALITYstarsNY

The foundation for a high-quality early childhood education system rests on standards that are based on long-standing and current research that demonstrates how these standards lead to improved outcomes for children. Continuous quality improvement systems, like QUALITYstarsNY, provide the framework of support to programs, staff, and providers to achieve these standards and along the way supports the sustainability of the program. At the same time, they provide families with up-to-date information on the quality of programs in their community enabling them to choose programs that best meet their and their child's needs.

In 2021 New York State invested \$35 million – made possible by the Federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to QUALITYstarsNY to double its portfolio of supported programs.

Unfortunately, the Federal funds are not ongoing and the current state budget allotment of

\$5M will not allow us to continue to support these programs. It is not in the State's best interest to expand the program only to stop providing supports. It is time for the State to commit to QUALITYstarsNY. A sustained investment in QUALITYstarsNY would ensure that these programs remain on track to improving and sustaining quality. It also means QUALITYstarsNY can support hundreds of additional programs. *The Alliance supports QUALITYstarsNY's request for an investment of \$20 million.*

SUPPORT CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

[Help Me Grow](#) is a nationally recognized, evidenced-based model that improves outcomes and reduces disparities in early developmental health and family well-being. Help Me Grow currently operates in 17 counties throughout the state and is based in Western New York, Long Island, Monroe County/Finger Lakes, and Onondaga County. The Alliance hopes that as Help Me Grow continues to expand across New York State, that our region can explore and implement the model.

Help Me Grow is primary prevention at its finest. The HMG model works across sectors (health care, child care, human services) to promote child development, make developmental and social emotional screening universally available, and provide ongoing support for families to effectively navigate systems to access services. New York remains 49th in conducting routine developmental screening. Children need to be identified early so interventions can begin as soon as possible. Help Me Grow is a proven prevention model that brings communities together to foster strong families and ensure that all children get the start they deserve. Last year the enacted budget supported Help Me Grow with an investment of \$1 million. *The Alliance supports the continued investment of \$1 million to support ongoing work of Help Me Grow in the 2024-25 fiscal year and encourage their expansion around the state.*

CLOSING

Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance appreciates the opportunity to share with you our communities' recommendations for improving services to children and families in the Adirondacks. We look forward to working with you during this legislative session.

For more information, please contact Kate Ryan, Director at Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance at Adirondack Foundation at kate.ryan@adkfoundation.org.