



**ParentChild+ Program Testimony
New York State Council Committee on Human Services**

**Submitted by ParentChild+
January 31st, 2024**

ParentChild+'s unique focus is on providing parents and other primary caregivers with the skills, knowledge, and materials they need to support school readiness in the home and build home learning environments that support children's language, literacy, numeracy, cognitive, and social-emotional skills. In doing this work, we are also helping parents learn what to look for in a child care setting, how to identify and access their children's next educational steps, and how to support their children's continued academic progress. Our partners in this work in New York State include school districts, BOCES, public libraries, social service agencies, literacy programs, community health centers, immigrant aid organizations, and community-based organizations. Focusing on school readiness and early literacy supports for families living in communities challenged by poverty, isolation, limited educational resources, and language and literacy barriers, ParentChild+ provided over 46,000 home visits and distributed over 23,000 books & educational toys statewide in 2023.

Prior to entering pre-k or kindergarten, many of the children living furthest from opportunity and children from families with home languages other than English are being cared for by family members or in informal home-based settings. These families are the least likely to have access to the information, materials, and activities to build their children's school readiness skills and ensure they have the language, literacy, and social-emotional skills that they need to enter a classroom ready to be successful students. ParentChild+ provides critical learning tools, books, and other educational, interaction-stimulating materials, to families with two- and three-year-olds. We reach families in their homes, where children spend the vast majority of their time even after they enter school, and if the children are not home but are with a neighbor or a family member, we also support home-based child care providers in providing school readiness rich environments for all the children in their care.

The program helps families and caregivers build literacy and learning-rich environments in their homes. They engage in two visits a week in their homes with a community-based, linguistically matched early learning specialist, or home visitor, who introduces the materials to the family, and coaches parents in reading, conversation, and play activities that support language, social-emotional, and early literacy skills. ParentChild+ staff also connect families to social service, educational, and basic needs supports when necessary and assist parents in planning for their children's next educational step, including registering their children for a pre-k or Head Start program.



On Tuesday, January 9th, Governor Hochul's State of the State address highlighted the critical importance of ensuring that children are reading on grade level. We at ParentChild+ are grateful for her proposed investments in and future vision for the State of New York. We support the goal of enhancing supports for building children's reading skills as the key to educational success and future achievement.

The Governor is proposing to train teachers in the scientific methodology of phonics, and to provide up to ten million dollars to ensure that teachers are trained to do so. Teacher training and support are critical, but at ParentChild+ we know that the development of early literacy skills, a love of learning, and the social-emotional skills to navigate a classroom, and in fact to learn to read, begins long before a child enters a classroom, in the earliest years namely 0-4. That is why it is also so important to invest in early childhood programming and supports for families that will ensure that children arrive in their classrooms prepared to take advantage of trained teachers and high quality curricula.

For nearly 60 years ParentChild+ has collaborated with parents and children in their safest space, their homes. Our model provides for 92 home visits and 46 books and education toys that not only support parents in developing launch children's early literacy skills, but also their social-emotional skills and provides tools for the parents or other caring adults to use in their homes when children are in their care.

While we applaud and appreciate the governor's commitment to early childhood education, it is our hope that investments will be made in programs like ParentChild+, programs that focus on the first and most important teachers of the young children, their parents and primary caregivers.

ParentChild+ works with parents and their children and home-based child care across New York with 26 program partners in seven of the largest counties in New York state namely, Onondaga, Erie, Westchester, Rockland, Nassau, Suffolk, the Capital Region and four New York City boroughs. ParentChild+ looks forward to collaborating with Governor Hochul, the legislature, and all the state agencies that are committed to seeing that all New York children have an opportunity for success.

The support provided by New York State is critical to preparing children to enter school ready to be in a classroom and to ensuring that they move through school successfully. ParentChild+ appreciates the state funding of \$200,000, which supports work in three of our communities, but we humbly request a \$300,00 increase to expand our reach even further throughout the state supporting young children by supporting both parents and home based child care providers.

Thank-you,
Andre D. Eaton, ParentChild+
New York State Director