

FACULTY STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Thank you for taking the time to read and listen to each of our testimonies today. My name is Casey Goodwin and I am the Director of the child care center at Tompkins Cortland Community College. I want to start out by thanking you for the support over the last 3 years with the stabilization grants as well as recruitment and retention grant. Those grants were helpful to be able to give our staff well deserved bonuses as well as some small wage increases. However, unfortunately they did not fix the wage issue or child care crisis.

The current child care grant that is coming out to help with the child care crises is not being put to good use. We all know there is a child care crises but have you gone out into the field to find out why? We can build more centers and expand capacity but you will still have a crisis on your hands. Why is that? It starts with a lack of teachers. In a short survey that was sent out to child care centers, "90% of child care centers reported experiencing a staffing shortage, 70% of family and group family child care programs reported that they could provide more care for infants and toddlers if they were fully staffed, 67% of programs reported having to reduce capacity, close classrooms, or close their programs completely on short notice due to staff absences, leaving families to scramble for last minute care or miss work." I currently have two fully closed classrooms and two classrooms running at 50% capacity due to staffing. If all the licensed child care centers were able to open all of the closed classrooms around the state you would see this crisis that has been talked about, would likely be cut in half. This grant money needs to go directly to the licensed centers themselves. They need to be able to have guaranteed state support each year so that we can start paying our employees a living wage and not just hoping we might be able to give them a bonus to supplement the low wages throughout the year.

The child care center that I run is a SUNY center. Our SUNY operation funds have not had an increase for a number of years. In addition, we have had an increase in minimum wages, increased cost of consumables, increased cost of living, but we have not received an increase in our awards to help cover those increasing costs. So where is the money coming from to balance our budget and make sure we can pay our staff? It comes from raising the cost of care for families. Families who do not qualify for Child Care assistance pay an astronomical rate for care. We are fortunate that the income eligibilities continue to go up for families so that they do not have the burden of the ever rising child care costs but not all families qualify. What does it say about the profession when a working parent works at your child care center and doesn't even make enough money to not be on state assistance? They receive child care assistant, WIC, SNAP and housing. We have a serious problem that starts with a lack of state funding. The state needs to start seeing us, the teachers, as professionals and helping support the cost of these professionals just as you do for public schools.

My center is a QualityStarsNY accredited center. We strive to be the best in New York and our teachers all have college degrees or are working toward them. These are educated individuals who are passionate about their profession but make less than a living wage. "Despite their high skill, training, and value to children and families, child care educators make less than 97% of all other professions in

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New York.” They are stressed, burnt out, over worked due to the state regulations, and being held to the highest state standards with OCFS regulations. A public school teacher can leave their classroom unattended to go to the bathroom if needed, but in a child care setting you can’t even leave the children with 1 teacher for the other teacher to use the bathroom. A child care center has to call OCFS and report a violation on ourselves if anything goes wrong during the day, for example, if a child opens a classroom door. This reporting doesn’t happen at public schools. These teachers’ deserve higher wages and the state needs to come through! Reallocate the money to the true reason we have a child care crises, not to building new buildings.

Without the support from the state there will be more and more closed classrooms due to lack of staff and then more and more parents will need to either look to family members for help or quit their own job. Please consider making a yearly commitment to licensed child care centers to help pay teachers a living wage so that we can keep these classrooms open.

Thank you again,



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