



**TESTIMONY**  
**2025-26 JOINT LEGISLATIVE**  
**BUDGET HEARING**  
**HUMAN SERVICES**  
**February 12, 2025**

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 2025-26 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 centers, health care and early intervention providers and agencies, businesses, municipalities, and families. Founded in 2015, the Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance connects a network of public and private programs that provide services to young children and their families, 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 (Alliance) 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.

## 2025-26 Executive Budget

### Universal Child Care

The Alliance applauds the Governor's commitment to moving New York State to universal child care. There is no need to delay our commitment to the families and businesses that rely on an accessible and robust child care system. There are successful models for universal child care, including the [Quebec model](#), across the border of our North Country region.

The State needs to make a large investment in child care in order to transition to a model that is sustainable. In the Adirondacks, there are simply not enough providers. The business model is not sustainable. It is too expensive for some to become licensed and for those licensed, they are unable to support their families on the income. The turnover of providers is too great to support the region.

Between 2019 and 2024, the Adirondack region has lost nearly 30% of its child care capacity. To stop the hemorrhage and recruit new providers, investments are necessary. On average, the path to opening a licensed program takes six to nine months and costs \$3,000. It is critical that after an individual makes these investments, the career they embark on is sustainable.

The Alliance looks forward to working with Governor Hochul and the Legislature is moving New York State to universal child care.

### Child Care Infrastructure

The Alliance appreciates and supports Governor Hochul's recommendation to invest \$100 million on child care center infrastructure and \$10 million for family based child care providers. Assisting providers with capital expenses will help many improve facilities and expand programs. We encourage the State to develop the program in a way that recognizes the challenges facing providers and limit any administrative barriers to accessing the investment.

### Child Care Substitute Pool

The Alliance appreciates the Governor's interest in resolving a pervasive challenge facing child care providers. There are simply not enough child care educators in the state and when existing staff are absent programs are sometimes unable to meet – even temporarily – their responsibilities. Child care rooms go dark and families are left without care.

The Child Care Substitute Pool is an intriguing concept. It is unclear how this proposal overcomes the obstacles related to background check requirements. It is also unclear how this concept would be affordable to child care programs already financially struggling. In addition, implementation in rural areas will take careful consideration and will differ from urban and suburban implementation due to reliance on family-based child care, large distances between programs, and an ongoing workforce crisis limiting substitute availability.

We look forward to learning more about the Child Care Substitute Pool and appreciate the creative thinking behind the proposal.

## Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council (CPRAC)

The Alliance supports the final [recommendation](#) of the Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council. We thank Governor Hochul for committing to the work of the Council and the organizations that provided professional and technical assistance.

We support the Executive budget proposal to increase the child tax credit. While the proposal only partially reflects the recommendation of the Council it is a positive step forward that will benefit many families across New York State.

We encourage the State to continue to consider the recommendations of the Council and set forth a path to full adoption.

## 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 2025-26 Budget and Legislative Agenda. (Linked [HERE](#))

As stated earlier, 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 staff. While New York works to develop universal child care we must make the necessary investments in the workforce to ensure the fiscal viability of these services.

## INCREASE ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE

### CHILD CARE RESOURCE CENTERS (CCRCs)

[Child Care Resource Centers](#) are community based not-for-profit organizations dedicated to the support of child care. Embedded in our communities, CCRCs are uniquely positioned to provide support to new and existing child care providers and assist families in identifying programs. These community-based organizations provide professional development, training, and financial support to help new providers become licensed and existing providers succeed. The Alliance strongly encourages the state's ongoing support Child Care Resource Centers.

### 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. Alliance strongly encourages the state's ongoing support of QUALITYstarsNY through a \$25 million investment, which would help ensure QUALITYstarsNY can continue to support our current participating programs, as well as assist additional ones.

## 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 (HMG) currently operates in 17 counties throughout the state and is based in Western New York, Long Island, Monroe County/Finger Lakes, Oswego, 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 49<sup>th</sup> 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 an increase of \$1 million (total of \$2 million) to support ongoing work of Help Me Grow in the 2025-26 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](mailto:kate.ryan@adkfoundation.org).