



**Testimony of Caitlyn Passaretti and Jenny Veloz
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York**

**Submitted to the New York State FY27 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing
on Elementary and Secondary Education
January 29th, 2026**

For 80 years, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC) has been an independent voice for children advancing child and family well-being through research, advocacy, and civic engagement. With deep expertise in data, policy and child-serving systems, CCC champions proven solutions and mobilizes allies to secure reforms that improve child outcomes and promote equity. CCC drives systems change to ensure every child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe.

We would like to thank Chairs Pretlow, Krueger, Mayer, and Benedetto, and members of the Assembly Ways and Means, Senate Finance, and Senate and Assembly Education Committees for holding today's Joint Hearing and the opportunity to respond to Governor Hochul's FY27 Executive Budget.

Equity in Schools and School Funding

We appreciate that in the FY 27 Executive Budget, Governor Hochul proposes to fully fund the Foundation Aid per pupil funding formula. However, due to the changes made in the formula in last year's state budget, New York City Public Schools will receive \$314 million less than if there were no changes to the formula at all. This is a result of an outdated funding formula that fails to take into account NYC's higher cost of living or consider the needs of the 154,000 NYC students experiencing homelessness.

We therefore join partners within the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding (CEEF) in urging Governor Hochul and the New York State Legislature to make key reforms to the methodology used or school funding distribution including adding a per pupil funding weight for students who are homeless or in foster care and updating the Regional Cost Index, which has not been updated since 2006. These proposals are included in legislation S.8139/A.9048 and S.8125/A.9049 sponsored by Senator John Liu and Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon. Without these changes to the Foundation Aid formula, NYC public schools will be denied hundreds of millions of dollars intended to serve students with the greatest needs.

Finally, we cannot emphasize enough the need to finally revisit Foundation Aid. Given the complex nature of the formula itself and the ever-changing needs of public schools, ongoing review of the formula by independent experts and stakeholders is essential to ensure it incorporates adequate, up-to-date measures of students' need, and provides equitable funding to districts across the State.

Advancing Universal Pre-Kindergarten

We applaud Governor Hochul for proposing historic investments in universal pre-kindergarten, child care programs for infants and toddlers, and the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) in her Executive Budget. Among other proposals, the Executive Budget invests \$500 million for existing and new seats created by districts as they expand their Pre-K programs, equaling either \$10,000 per pupil or the district's current selected Foundation Aid per pupil, whichever is greater. With these new rates starting in FY27, school districts will be able to immediately serve more Pre-K students. The Governor has also committed to helping NYC achieve truly universal 3-K.

CCC urges the Legislature to adopt the Governor's proposed investments in the early education system – as well as investments across the child care system – to bring New York State closer to its goal of achieving universal child care. However, as New York City and State look to expand 3-K and Pre-K programs, we must not forget the thousands of children with disabilities across the state waiting for their legally mandated preschool special education services. A recent audit from the New York State Comptroller's Office found that of the 550 school districts that responded (not including New York City), 83% had waitlists for preschool special education services.ⁱ **If New York State is invested in a truly universal Pre-K system, it must include sufficient resources for children with disabilities.**

Thank you for your consideration and for your support of students throughout New York State.

ⁱ New York State Comptroller's Office. Critical Pre-School Special Education Services Not Reaching All Students Who Need Them. December 2024. <https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/state-agencies/audits/pdf/sga-2025-23s1.pdf>