



Early Care & Learning Council

United to Promote Quality

**Joint Legislative Public Hearing:
FY 2027 Executive Budget Proposal
Human Services**

Submitted by
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For more than 50 years, Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&Rs) agencies throughout New York have been working to increase the quality, affordability and accessibility of the early care and education system in the state. Early Care & Learning Council (ECLC) is the coordinating agency for the CCR&R network. We elevate the voices of the CCR&Rs, and advocate for an equitable early care and education system. ECLC offers training and professional development to CCR&Rs and delivers innovative curricula that supports the building of sustainable child care systems throughout the state. The network of 35 CCR&Rs provides direct assistance and support to parents, child care providers, and employers in all 62 counties. We are thankful to the Hochul Administration and the Office of Children and Family Services for their continuous support of our programs and recognition of the key role CCR&Rs play in the child care ecosystem.

CCR&Rs are local, nonprofit community-based organizations that serve to support families, child care providers, employers, and policymakers. They are the front lines of the child care support system. CCR&Rs help families find and choose child care that fits their needs and budget. They provide information on how to pay for child care, including subsidy programs like the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). CCR&Rs give training and technical support for child care providers to expand supply and quality, as well as collect and share data on child care supply, needs, and trends with state partners. CCR&Rs also deliver grant funds, supports, and resources to providers on behalf of state or federal sources.

ECLC applauds the \$1.7 billion increase, and total FY 2027 investment in child care and Pre-K of \$4.5 billion across child care and Pre-K programs in the Executive Budget. These proposals comprise a historic investment to reach universal child care. The commitment to expanding CCAP, which will continue to provide working families with quality, accessible, and affordable early education, is particularly laudable. CCR&Rs are uniquely positioned to support the expanded role out of CCAP through our partnerships with community-based organizations and our unique ability to navigate the complex child care system. Counties administer CCAP payments (there are a few exceptions), but CCR&Rs ensure families and providers can access those funds. Without CCR&Rs:

- Families struggle to navigate complicated systems
- Providers face barriers to participation
- CCAP dollars go unused or are delayed

CCR&Rs reduce administrative friction, expand participation, and ensure state investments move quickly and equitably into local communities.

The Executive Budget also includes an increase in the appropriation for CCR&R contracts of \$5 million. This would ensure that the network of CCR&R organizations has the tools and capacity to function at the highest level and support the roll out of new programming. New York's child care and pre-k investments depend on CCR&Rs. New York has made historic new investments in the CCAP, expanding funding, modernizing systems, and this budget brings the opportunity to roll out initiatives like 2Care to reach more working families. These investments are critical to New York's workforce and economy. But funding alone does not create access, CCAP works because CCR&R agencies make it work.

- CCAP funding is only effective if families and providers can use it
- CCR&Rs are the infrastructure that makes CCAP accessible
- Strong CCR&Rs and higher CCAP uptake, build stronger providers, and better outcomes

CCAP is one of the state's most effective workforce supports. It allows parents to work, attend school, or participate in job training while ensuring children are cared for in safe, licensed settings. For providers, CCAP offers stable enrollment and predictable revenue—keeping child care programs open in communities statewide.

Furthermore, three of our CCR&Rs are eager to work with OCFS and their local social services district to create contracted pilot programs for child care for child ages 0-3. We are delighted to hear that the state will work with Dutchess, Monroe, and Broome counties to develop additional child care pilot programs and permit each participating county to contract with a CCR&R to administer the project.

The State's new CCAP investments and initiatives create opportunity. CCR&Rs turn that opportunity into reality. We must seize this opportunity to build on the momentum of previous investments, but without a simultaneous investment across the child care system, we will continue to destabilize providers and undermine that system from the start. Now is the time for intentional focus on systems; both long and short term, otherwise we risk destabilizing the sector. This includes the workforce that educates children and other systems along the continuum that work in tandem to provide comprehensive care, including afterschool programs. The state has research and recommendations of experts: cost studies, career ladders, compensation scales and a universal afterschool feasibility

study. Now is the time to begin to implement these recommendations and to ensure the other investments being made are leveraged and not squandered.

A small pilot of universal after school could be done in the same counties where the 0-3 contracted seat pilot is being tried for a total of \$10.2 million. This calculation comes from eligible but not funded Learning and Enrichment After-School Program Supports (LEAPS) initiative seats in each county at \$3,400 a student. Sustained, strategic, and permanent investments must be made in all parts of the child care sector to keep moving forward on the path to universal child care.

CCR&Rs work with various partners in the child care ecosystem to meet the needs of families, providers and businesses. They have specialized knowledge of the communities they serve and can be a valuable resource as 2Care is rolled out in New York City and new child care pilots are built in upstate counties to provide affordable care to families regardless of income level. This expansion, coupled with making Pre-K truly universal statewide, will ensure that New York's children get all the building blocks for a successful future. CCR&Rs will play a key role through assessing community child care needs and linking various program supports and services for families.

Families depend on functioning child care. This is where CCR&Rs play a pivotal role. CCR&Rs work with our partners around the state and OCFS to ensure communities can navigate the child care conundrum. Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments to you. As New York pioneers universal child care, ECLC and the CCR&R network stand ready to assist.