

February 5, 2026

Chairwoman Liz Krueger (Senate Finance Committee Chair)  
Chairman Gary Pretlow (Assembly Ways & Means Committee Chair)  
Joint Legislative Public Hearing on Human Services  
181 State Street, Hearing Room B, 2nd Floor,  
Albany, NY, 12247

***RE: 2026 Executive Budget Proposal***

Chairpersons and Honorable Members of the Senate and Assembly:

On behalf of KinderCare, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the Executive Budget proposals affecting early childhood education and child care. Our testimony aligns with the priorities raised by the Early Care & Education Consortium and similarly emphasizes the importance of stable, sufficient funding and a mixed delivery child care system across New York State.

KinderCare is proud to support working families across New York at our **20 high quality early learning centers and 5 before and after school Champions sites**. We **serve over 2,000 children statewide, and 25% of the children we serve utilize the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and employ over 500 trained early childhood educators and staff** across our centers and sites. We also support New York's mixed delivery approach to universal prekindergarten (UPK), with 6 centers across the state participating in these critical programs. As the Legislature considers statewide investments, it is essential to recognize that state-level funding and policy decisions go together with city implementation and investments as both are needed for providers across the mixed delivery system.

KinderCare supports the goal of expanding access to full-day UPK for four-year-olds statewide, and we appreciate the recognition that reimbursement rates have often fallen short of the true cost of delivering high-quality early education. However, **the success of UPK depends on a mixed delivery system that fully includes community-based providers alongside school districts**. New York's early learning infrastructure relies on this approach to:

1. Expand access quickly;
2. Meet families where they are;
3. Leverage existing capacity, and
4. Preserve continuity of care for children from birth through age five.

We **urge the legislature to ensure that UPK expansion and related funding streams explicitly preserve and strengthen mixed delivery**. Excluding community-based providers would reduce available seats, disrupt family child care arrangements, and undermine parental choice, particularly for working families who rely on full-day, year-round care.

Also, we **support investments made to strengthen the UPK system**. Sufficient per-pupil funding is critical for maintaining program quality, workforce stability, and equitable access across district and provider types. To be effective, these investments must flow in a timely and administratively workable manner to all eligible providers, including community-based programs operating under contracts with school districts. Any approach that relies primarily on district-operated classrooms risks worsening capacity and workforce constraints that already exist in many communities.

KinderCare also strongly supports **sustained and sufficient funding for CCAP so eligible working families can access stable care**, and providers can continue serving children without disruptive gaps in service. We are increasingly concerned, as counties have closed enrollment and opened waitlists, turning away otherwise-

eligible families. These disruptions harm families, destabilize provider operations, and can force parents out of the workforce.

Finally, we share **concerns regarding the uncertainty of federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) resources and how disruptions or restrictions could affect New York's child care system**. KinderCare respectfully requests greater clarity from the Administration and the Legislature regarding the sustainability of current CCDF resources. Specifically, we seek information on how long existing CCDF reserves are expected to support current child care subsidies and programs should another federal funding freeze or restriction occur, whether contingency plans are in place if federal limitations continue or expand, and how the State intends to prevent abrupt disruptions to providers and families who rely on these critical funds.

In conclusion, KinderCare supports the Governor's early childhood proposals and appreciates the Legislature's leadership in advancing a stronger, more stable early care and education system. To achieve these shared goals, we respectfully urge the legislature to:

1. **Preserve and strengthen mixed delivery in all UPK expansions** and related aid streams, fully including community-based providers.
2. **Ensure CCAP is adequately supported** so eligible families can access and maintain reliable care without disruptive waitlists or breaks in service.
3. **Address fiscal and operational risks** posed by uncertainty in federal CCDF funding, including clear contingency planning.

KinderCare is ready to work with the Legislature, the Administration, school districts, and municipal partners, to ensure New York's early care and education system remains stable, inclusive, and responsive to families' needs. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sincerely,



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