

**Testimony in Support of Full Funding of Universal Child Care Programs
in New York State**

**For the hearing of the
Joint Budget and Legislative Committees**

**Submitted to the
Human Services Committee**

February 03, 2026

Dear Chairwoman Senator Liz Krueger, Chairwoman Assemblymember Helene E. Weinstein, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Sarah Ribeiro and I am a parent residing in Brooklyn, NY. I am writing to strongly urge your full support and funding to deliver Universal Child Care to New York State.

I am a New York parent writing to share how the combined failures of limited paid leave and unaffordable childcare have created a sustained crisis for my family—and for countless others across our state.

I had my first child in May 2023 while working for a small international marketing agency. Because of my employer's size and structure, I did not qualify for paid family leave and instead relied on short-term disability. This provided only partial income—about 60% of my salary—for a maximum of nine weeks, due to my child arriving after my leave began. I returned to work before I was medically cleared, still recovering physically and mentally, and without the financial stability needed to ease that transition.

The financial consequences were immediate and long-lasting. By the end of my leave, I had depleted most of my savings and taken on credit card debt simply to cover basic expenses. Like many parents, I was forced to make tradeoffs—cutting back on necessities such as healthy food—in order to stay afloat.

Because childcare was unaffordable, I worked from home while caring for my child for the first eight months of her life. This took a serious toll on my mental health, my confidence as a professional, and my ability to perform at work. Trying to balance full-time caregiving with full-time employment was unsustainable, yet there were no viable alternatives.

Shortly after my child's first birthday, I was laid off and faced another impossible reality. I spent my days job hunting, networking, refining my résumé, and piecing together odd jobs to pay rent—while simultaneously attempting to navigate New York's childcare voucher system. Despite clear financial need, I faced multiple rejections and delays. It took seven months to finally secure a voucher, prolonging financial instability during an already vulnerable period. During this time, the lack of insurance meant no access to healthcare or therapy, forcing me once again to put my own well-being last.

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Today, even while employed, I pay approximately \$25,000 per year for childcare—a cost comparable to college tuition and one that consumes an enormous portion of household income. This is not an exception; it is the reality for working families across New York. Childcare is not optional. It is essential infrastructure that enables parents to work, contribute to the economy, and support their families.

My experience underscores a broader truth: New York’s childcare and family support systems are not built to support families during critical life transitions—birth, job loss, recovery, or reentry into the workforce. High costs, inaccessible assistance programs, and insufficient paid leave are pushing parents into financial precarity and driving many—especially mothers—out of the workforce altogether.

I urge policymakers to treat childcare and paid family leave as the economic imperatives they are. New York families need affordable, accessible childcare; expanded and responsive voucher programs; and policies that reflect the true cost of living and working in this state. Without meaningful reform, families will continue to struggle—and the state’s workforce and economy will continue to pay the price.

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I urge the full funding of a statewide 3K and Pre-K Guarantee, and 2- Care in New York City to tackle the issue of Child Care Affordability.

Sincerely,

Sarah Ribeiro

Brooklyn, NY

Submitted via New Yorkers United for Child Care (united4childcare.org)