

February 25, 2026

EdTrust-New York is pleased to submit this testimony on child care and the child care workforce to the Labor and Workforce Joint Budget Committee.

Ed Trust–New York is a statewide policy and advocacy organization that seeks to close opportunity gaps that keep too many students from reaching their full potential, especially students of color—particularly Black, Latinx, Native American and Asian American and Pacific Islander students, and those from low-income backgrounds. Our work is data-driven and student-centered, and we work in partnership with civil rights, education, parents, nonprofit and business organizations across the State.

We appreciate the opportunity to share this testimony with members of this committee as you consider the 2026-2027 State Budget. As an organization committed to pursuing equity in education, our work focuses on ensuring policies, structures, and systems exist so that all children are equipped with the skills and resources necessary to be successful in whatever paths they may choose for college or career and beyond.

EdTrust-New York’s 2026 policy agenda is premised on the belief that all children can succeed in school when provided with high-quality, culturally relevant instruction and support that is equity-driven, data-centered, and student-focused. To improve outcomes across the state for students of color—particularly Black, Latinx, Native American, and Asian American and Pacific Islander students, and students from low-income backgrounds, EdTrust-New York advocates for an equitable system of education that helps schools meet the following milestones:

1. Every child is ready for kindergarten success;
2. Every student has the foundational skills necessary to be proficient in reading by the end of 3rd grade, and proficient in math by 8th grade, while receiving science of learning-based instruction from an effective, diverse educator workforce;
3. Every student has access to advanced coursework, college in high school opportunities, and a meaningful diploma that signifies they are prepared for college and career;
4. Every child is part of an equitable system of funding and support that targets resources to the districts and schools that need it the most, monitors student progress, and collects data to track student outcomes from cradle to career;



5. Every high school graduate is provided with the information, support, and financial aid needed to enroll in and complete college or postsecondary training and;

6. Every student has access to a safe and welcoming school environment that prioritizes the social and emotional well-being of students, including multilingual learners and immigrant students.

The Governor's 2026-27 Executive Budget includes several important steps that address these milestones and EdTrust-New York supports the inclusion of the following proposals in the Legislature's final enacted budget to ensure that every child has access to a stable and well supported early childhood workforce that prepares children for kindergarten readiness.

### **Universal Child Care**

EdTrust-New York welcomes Governor Hochul's commitment to deliver universal child care for all children under five and applauds her \$4.5 billion investment this year, along with her pledge to provide additional funding in future years. This long-overdue promise invests directly in young children, their families, the child care workforce, and the long-term strength and equity of New York's economy. We also commend the Governor for prioritizing the statewide expansion of universal pre-K and advance New York City's 3-K expansion, especially as the city faces a shortfall of roughly 16,000 seats this year. As the city and state move this work forward, they must ensure that new pre-K and 3-K seats provide full-day and after-school options and are located in the communities where families need them most.

We are further encouraged by the Governor's support for Mayor Mamdani's 2-Care Plan, including piloting expansions in high-need neighborhoods, and urge state and city leaders to strengthen this commitment in the final plan while protecting immigrant and mixed-status families by ensuring vouchers are not tied to federal funding that could jeopardize eligibility. Although the state narrowly avoided a major Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) shortfall last year, thousands of New York City families remain on waitlists, and the state must prioritize them for new seats under the Governor's \$1.2 billion CCAP investment.

- **We urge state leaders to meet critical milestones toward achieving universal child care, including increasing funding for the Child Care Assistance Program to eliminate waitlists and enrollment closures, identifying sustainable funding sources, securing and retrofitting facilities for child care centers, improving contracting and payment systems for providers, and launching efforts to build a strong pipeline of child care educators to meet the growing demand.**



## Child Care Workforce

EdTrust-New York appreciates these new child care investments. However, a universal child care system cannot succeed without a stable and well-supported workforce. The first three years of a child's life shape lifelong development, and child care professionals provide vital developmental support during this critical period. Yet they earn less than 96% of workers in other New York occupations. Low wages and limited career advancement worsen longstanding racial and economic inequities: 94% of New York's 69,000 child-care workers are women, and more than half, 58%, are women of color.

We are encouraged by the Governor's proposal to expand scholarships and financial aid for aspiring early childhood educators, including by designating early childhood education as a high-demand occupation eligible for workforce Pell Grants and by supporting SUNY and CUNY in expanding existing early childhood programs. However, without increasing compensation, these important steps will not build a sustainable early childhood educator workforce. We look forward to working with the state to invest in family-sustaining compensation for the child care workforce, and clearly defined career pathways across both home-based and center-based settings.

EdTrust-New York's previous work with the Raising New York Coalition and the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) on [the true cost of child care model](#) confirms that a universal system requires long-term commitment, substantial and permanent funding, and policies that prioritize the needs of children, families, and the professionals who support them.

We also urge state leaders to make significant investments in the human services workforce to ease overburdened caseloads, shorten waitlists and wait times, and raise wages to recruit and retain qualified staff.

Finally, we are encouraged by the Governor's plan to expand the child and dependent care tax credit and we urge the state to decouple any new tax incentives from the federal code so immigrant and mixed-status families can equitably access these critical supports.

- **EdTrust-NY urges the creation of a permanent workforce compensation fund to raise childcare worker wages. The fund should be based on existing models showing the true cost of care and the implementation of a career lattice based on education and experience.**

EdTrust-New York looks forward to working with state leaders, parents, educators, and families to turn this commitment to universal child care to reality and ensure it delivers on



its promise for every child, every family, every provider, and every community across New York.