



**Testimony before the Joint Fiscal Committees
on the SFY 2026-27 Executive Budget
Labor/Workforce Development Budget Hearing
February 25, 2026**

The Empire State Campaign for Child Care is a statewide coalition of parents, educators, and advocates who believe that every family in New York State deserves high quality, universal child care and that every child care educator deserves to earn a thriving wage. The campaign was founded in 2017, and advocates at the state and federal level for investment in child care that best serves the needs of New York’s families and child care educators.

Top Labor/Workforce Development Budget Recommendations for 2026

The Empire State Campaign for Child Care urges the legislature to build upon the Governor’s historic child care proposals by providing ongoing and reliable compensation supplements to all members of the child care workforce. This fund is essential until New York achieves statewide universal child care that pays providers adequate rates to pay the workforce a thriving wage.

This can be achieved by creating a \$1.2B permanent state fund to increase child care worker compensation sufficient to offer all members of the child care workforce a significant boost in income (**Child Care Workforce Pay Equity Fund S.5533 (Brisport)/A.492 (Hevesi)**). Finding and retaining child care educators and those in supporting roles is the number one issue we hear from the field. We cannot achieve universal child care without recruiting and retaining far more early childhood educators. [The average wage for the child care workforce \(94% women, and more than 53% people of color\) is approximately \\$38,000, with family-based providers earning even less. In contrast, the median annual salary for full-time New York workers is approximately \\$67,000 per year.](#)

The \$1.2B state fund would boost wages by approximately \$12,000 - similar to the \$14,000 supplement (on average) that Washington D.C. implemented in 2022. [Washington DC’s increased compensation has significantly reduced turnover in the field, boosting child care educator employment, and expanding capacity.](#) Looking ahead, New York must establish a minimum pay scale and career ladder based upon agreed upon criteria. This pay scale will inform compensation supplement levels after the base pay scale for all has been increased.

Despite the unprecedented investments in the Child Care Assistance Program, and to launch 2-Care in New York City and universal child care pilot projects outside of New York City - which we applaud - , the Executive Budget allocates no funds for the child care workforce. If no funding is added before the budget is finalized, this will be the second year in a row since the pandemic that there are no funds for the child care workforce. In 2023, one-time retention bonuses were awarded to child care educators: \$3,000 full time; \$2,300 afterschool. In 2024, bonuses of \$2,250 for full time educators; \$1,725 for afterschool.

We urge the Legislature to adopt and build from the Governor's proposed historic investments in child care by creating a \$1.2B permanent state fund to increase child care worker compensation sufficient to offer all members of the child care workforce a significant boost in income. This is a necessary component to achieving the shared goal of universal child care in New York State.