



Supporting Families, Employers & New York's Future:

An Action Plan for a Strong and Equitable Child Care System

Final Report of the Child Care Availability Task Force

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SHEILA J. POOLE
Commissioner

KATHLEEN C. HOCHUL
Lieutenant Governor

ROBERTA REARDON
Commissioner

Dear Governor Cuomo, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Speaker Heastie:

Affordable and accessible child care is one of the most important issues impacting our families, communities, and workforce today. The Child Care Availability Task Force was assembled by Governor Cuomo in 2018, recognizing that child care is not just a women's issue, but a societal and economic issue that touches every family, in every community, regardless of neighborhood or economic status. The COVID-19 pandemic has further demonstrated how foundational child care is to our lives and our economy.

We owe our deepest thanks to the members of the Task Force who invested countless hours over nearly two years to embrace this complex issue with great passion and purpose. This report reflects both, and includes a balance of aspirational and practical recommendations to ensure that working families have access to safe, quality, and affordable child care. In addition to the expertise brought by Task Force members, national and international experts were called upon to inform the work and we are grateful for their contributions in helping to develop and inform these recommendations.

While the work of the Task Force was underway, and over the last decade, New York State has been relentlessly committed to child care access and supporting families with child care-aged children. Each year since 2011, New York committed approximately \$800 million to help low-income New Yorkers access high-quality care. Including child-focused tax credits and pre-kindergarten programs, support for families with child care-aged children totals nearly \$2.8 billion, an increase of more than \$500 million since FY 2011.

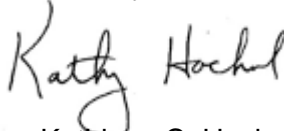
In recognition of the critical role child care plays in our economy, the Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs) were required to include child care as part of their 2019 regional economic development strategies. As a result, through round nine of the REDC awards, \$8.7 million was awarded to 15 projects to increase access to child care. In his 2021 State of the State agenda, Governor Cuomo made these child care work groups permanent and committed to convening an annual summit on child care and its impact on the economy.

But there is more work to be done, and New York is wasting no time taking action on the recommendations in this report. The enacted FY 2022 New York State Budget supplements existing investments with \$2.3 billion in federal child care resources to expand availability, quality and affordability of child care across the state. These investments will help stabilize the child care industry, expand subsidy eligibility, limit child care costs for low-income working families, and increase capacity in child care "deserts."

The Budget also enhances the Employer Provided Child Care Credit to provide meaningful incentives to employers to help them provide child care to their employees.

The Child Care Availability Task Force aspired to create recommendations to set the course for New York to lead the nation, building upon Governor Cuomo's investments and commitment to child care issues. New York is already making this vision a reality and together we will continue this critical work. On behalf of the Task Force, we are pleased to present their work and recommendations in this report.

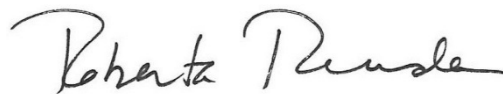
Sincerely,



Kathleen C. Hochul
Lieutenant Governor



Commissioner Sheila J. Poole
New York State Office of Children
and Family Services



Commissioner Roberta Reardon
New York State Department of Labor

INTRODUCTION

New York State’s child care system — essential to both our economic development and the well-being of our state’s children — is at a tipping point.

When announcing the Child Care Availability Task Force in December 2018, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo made clear that “affordable and high-quality child care is not only vital for working families, it’s also essential to strengthening our state’s economy and by continuing to create these opportunities for parents to succeed in both work and family life we are building a stronger New York for all.”² Lieutenant Governor and Task Force Co-Chair Kathy Hochul has likewise reinforced the essential role of child care, writing that, “The conversation on child care is changing. No longer is it seen as a woman’s responsibility. It is an essential service for families and their employers.”³

Unfortunately, for years, access to high-quality child care has been limited to those who can afford it or are fortunate enough to receive a subsidy and be able to locate quality care. This limits the ability of parents of young children to enter and succeed in the workforce, and for employers to find and retain skilled workers. Meanwhile, child care providers — themselves often women-owned small businesses — have suffered from low wages and an unsustainable business model. Across the board, the impact of these overlapping crises has been disproportionately borne by communities of color and families from low-income backgrounds.

The dual pandemics of COVID-19 and the national reckoning with systemic racism has made this challenge even worse — shuttering providers, decimating enrollment, and risking the very foundation of the sector.



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Again, communities of color and low-income communities have faced the starkest impact. According to the New York State Department of Health, while Black New Yorkers make up 22% of the population, they have experienced 28% of COVID-19 deaths; Latinx New Yorkers represent 29% of the population and 34% of COVID-19 deaths.⁴ Between February and April 2020, 18.8% of Black female workers lost their jobs due to the pandemic; the Census Bureau reported in October 2020 that 32.1% of women with children at home were not working, compared to 12.1% of men. Twenty-three percent of those women surveyed said they had “low confidence” in their ability to afford food. The pandemic is setting women in the workforce back decades — and threatening the very survival of many families.⁵

While the state’s use of federal stimulus funds has helped to suppress the damage, it alone is insufficient to rebuild the child care system, to address the needs that have long been unmet, and to do so while prioritizing equity.



The members of the Child Care Availability Task Force propose a new vision for making New York State the best place in the nation to raise a family, with a plan to ensure access to high-quality affordable child care for all families of infants, toddlers, and other young (including school-aged) children, and prioritizing the very communities that have been historically underserved.

The Task Force’s conclusions are rooted in the explicit recognition that growing our state’s economy – and doing so equitably – requires a dramatically different approach to child care: one that recognizes that high-quality child care is a public good and that provides the necessary public investment and expanded access based on that understanding.

Researchers estimate that for every \$1 invested in early care and education in New York State, \$1.86 is generated in additional spending within the state.⁶

Yet despite this clear positive return on investment, the child care landscape is characterized by major gaps in affordability, access, and quality – with a resulting negative impact on our economy.

According to a statewide poll conducted in the fall of 2020, the majority of New York State business leaders say the lack of accessibility and availability of high-quality child care for infants and toddlers negatively impacts their businesses and their ability to hire and retain employees. Nearly three in four business leaders believe investment in access to child care for children ages birth-to-3 would have a positive impact on their business.⁷

Further evidence that the state’s child care system is broken is that 64% of New Yorkers live in communities that qualify as child

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care deserts, meaning the community lacks sufficient child care for the vast majority of families that need it.⁸

In New York, the dearth of affordable, quality child care forces many parents to choose between working and doing what they believe is best for their child.

New York employers specifically cite employee absenteeism and calling-out due to lack of access and availability of child care for infants and toddlers, as well as reduced employee productivity and turnover due to child care issues, as contributing to loss in revenue.⁹

Even employees who can work struggle due to child care access and affordability, and on average, working parents in America miss five to nine days of work per year because of child care problems — costing U.S. businesses \$3 billion a year in lost productivity.¹⁰

Child care is a multi-billion-dollar industry that employs tens of thousands of New Yorkers and allows parents to work while their children are being cared for in a safe and healthy environment. Child care necessitates a high staff-to-child ratio, especially for care provided to infants and toddlers. Inadequate financial support of child care translates into inequitable and unjust compensation for the child care workforce. This, in turn, undermines the quality of care, in part by leading to high turnover and low morale among early childhood educators.

Of course, quality child care is not only about New York’s economic health; it also provides lasting and vital benefits to children and contributes to school readiness. Well-established brain research makes clear that the experiences that infants and toddlers have in the first few years of life can lay the neurological groundwork for cognitive growth and healthy physical, social, and emotional lives. Quality early care and learning also help reduce the disparities that are often associated with race, ethnicity, language, citizenship status, and socio-economic level. Children who have quality early learning experiences are less likely to drop out of high school, need public assistance, or become a teen parent; they are more likely to go to college and have good health as an adult.¹¹

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High-quality child care should be a public good, not a private privilege; one that is recognized as essential to a robust economy, self-sufficient families, and equitable early childhood development. Significantly more, sustained investment is needed in order to make it a public good that serves all families. New York must be creative and bold to secure the needed funds, including by drawing from the public and private sectors, and reimagining current funding.

The need is urgent. The time for action — for our economy, our workforce, and our children’s future — is now. And as this last year has proved, the Task Force has every confidence that state leaders can meet even the toughest challenges on behalf of all New Yorkers.

SUMMARY OF TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

1 CHILD CARE AFFORDABILITY

- 1.1 Set a statewide standard for affordability and enact a path to get there.
- 1.2 Adopt subsidy market rates that reflect the real cost of high-quality child care.
- 1.3 Make phase-in decisions based on racial equity and other equity priorities.
- 1.4 Maximize available funding across all sources.

2 EQUITABLE ACCESS TO CHILD CARE

- 2.1 End disparities caused by inequitable county-by-county fragmentation.
- 2.2 Increase provider capacity in order to eliminate “child care deserts.”
- 2.3 Improve fiscal stability for child care providers to give families confidence and stability.
- 2.4 Eliminate policies that force children out of early childhood care.
- 2.5 Engage employers as a key partner in establishing an affordable and accessible high-quality child care system.



3 HIGH-QUALITY CHILD CARE

- 3.1 Support program quality and provide transparency to families.
- 3.2 Pay the early childhood workforce fairly.
- 3.3 Provide pathways for early childhood educators to advance in their careers and professional learning.

4 COORDINATED SYSTEMS

- 4.1 Publicly communicate the status and impact of the child care system and New York State’s progress toward achieving the vision and steps proposed by the Task Force.
- 4.2 Develop a data system to support quality, efficiency, and transparency.
- 4.3 Streamline and coordinate across agencies to better serve families and child care providers.
- 4.4 Increase pre-kindergarten collaboration with community-based organizations.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

New York State needs a child care system that is **affordable, accessible, high-quality, and coordinated**. The Task Force’s findings and specific recommendations for achieving that goal follow.

1 Child Care Affordability

New York State should enact a comprehensive strategy to ensure that high-quality child care is affordable for every family with young children. While we recognize that implementation will take years, it should begin immediately with a clear, publicly articulated vision and plan that includes a commitment to prioritize families that are low-income, communities of color, and other historically underserved groups of infants, toddlers, and young children.

Key findings:

- Experts estimate that limiting families’ child care expenses to 10% of their income would save a typical New York family with an infant \$7,461 and generate \$22.5 billion in new economic activity driven by increases in mothers’ labor force participation statewide.¹²
- The average cost of child care for an infant in New York State is \$15,394 per year — more expensive than in all but five states in the country. Child care in New York State costs more than college, and infant care is more expensive than average rent.¹³
- Current child care subsidy rates are insufficient to cover the cost of quality child care in centers and in family-based child care, according to an independent analysis. The size of the gap between subsidy rates and the true cost of quality varies by region, but exists across the state for infants and toddlers.¹⁴



The Task Force’s vision for affordability

All New York families will have equitable access to affordable, high-quality child care from birth through school age regardless of income, race, ethnicity, immigration status, geographic location, or ability. To be affordable, families with gross family income equal to or less than 100% of the federal poverty level shall not pay for child care; families with gross family income between 100% of the federal poverty level and 150% of the federal poverty level shall pay no more than 7% of gross family income; and all other families shall pay no more than 10% of gross family income.

We recommend:

- 1.1 Setting a statewide standard for affordability and enacting a path to get there.** To promote workforce participation and economic growth, New York State should adopt a consistent and equity-driven statewide sliding scale so that families earning up to 100% of the federal poverty level do not pay additional out-of-pocket costs for child care; those earning between 100% and 150% of the federal poverty level are not expected to pay more than 7% of their gross income for child care; and no family is expected

to pay more than 10%. The sliding scale should be implemented through a combination of public investment strategies including:

- Leveraging and expanding existing successful programs including Early Head Start, Head Start, and pre-kindergarten;
- Building on support provided during the pandemic by investing sufficient state/federal resources to maintain county waivers that expanded subsidy eligibility – an important interim measure to make sure that New York does not lose ground while implementing these recommendations;
- Investing sufficient additional state/federal resources to require all counties to provide child care subsidies to families earning less than 85% of the state median income and maintaining a consistent statewide co-pay limit as described in Recommendation 2.1;¹⁵ and
- Providing tax credits to support child care affordability for working families who do not qualify for subsidies due to income eligibility.

1.2 Recognizing the real cost of high-quality child care in subsidy rates.

Current child care subsidy rates are insufficient to cover the cost of quality child care in centers and in family-based child care. The size of the gap between subsidy rates and the true cost of quality varies by region and exists across the state, particularly for infants and toddlers.¹⁶ The result is to keep workforce wages low and to limit provider quality.

For affordability to be meaningful, New York State should adopt subsidy rates that are aligned with the true cost of quality, including recognizing the higher cost of care necessary for infants and toddlers.

1.3 Making phase-in decisions based on racial equity and other equity priorities.

New York will not achieve universal access to high-quality child care overnight. Recognizing this, phased-in expansions to eligibility and access must prioritize the communities struggling most to achieve economic security and opportunity for their children, including those facing the challenges of structural racism, immigrant families, families experiencing homelessness, families raising children with special needs, parents searching for work or pursuing job training, families involved in the child welfare system, families struggling with domestic violence, and foster families. To meet the urgent needs of families most burdened by these challenges, New York State should first adopt the targeted steps described in Recommendation 2.1 that will specifically increase affordability for many of the underserved communities listed here. Then, New York State should incrementally raise statewide income eligibility levels for access to subsidies, and at the same time reduce co-pays until New York achieves universal access to affordable, high-quality child care.

1.4 Maximizing available funding across all sources.

Child care funding is a patchwork of federal, state, and local revenue; capital and operating funds; and public and private investment. New York State should better leverage and coordinate all available resources to

support families and child care providers. Key strategies include:

- **Braiding and blending funding streams.** New York State has committed close to \$4 billion in public funds for early care and education. These funds include close to \$849 million in state funded pre-kindergarten dollars, approximately \$830 million in federal child care subsidy funds, \$1.6 billion in preschool special education programs, and \$600 million for Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Despite these allocations, the early childhood system is still fractured and not able to provide equitable, universal access. Programs that receive two or more of these funding streams need the ability to maximize these funds by using the fiscal strategy of braiding and/or blending funds. Doing so would result in eliminating administrative barriers and providing additional high-quality programs. New York State should pilot processes and seek federal or state waivers, where necessary, to ensure that funds designed to support early childhood programs are able to be flexible to avoid redundancy and waste.
- **Increasing awareness and use of current tax credits.** New York State has tax credits for working families with children that can provide up to several thousand dollars in benefits for eligible families. However, not all families are aware of the availability of these credits and therefore fail to claim them on their income taxes. New York State should implement a coordinated outreach effort to promote and encourage the use of

these important benefits. New York State should also examine the newly enacted employer-provided child care credit to determine whether it provides a sufficient incentive to employers to offer child care.

- **Developing a suite of tax credits to meet additional needs where appropriate.** Tax credits cannot be a substitute for direct public investment, but they should be used to supplement the recommendations in this report. In addition to the proposed tax credits described in other recommendations, tax credits could help support the child care workforce and attract and retain skilled early childhood educators, support high-quality child care facilities, and offset the direct cost to employers associated with providing child care for their employees.

2 Equitable Access to Child Care

New York State should eliminate the systemic barriers caused by state and local policies and insufficient high-quality provider capacity, especially for programs that serve infants and toddlers.

Key findings:

- 64% of New Yorkers live in a “child care desert” — a community with no child care providers or far too few providers to meet families’ needs.¹⁷
- From 2011 to 2017, only the top 20% wealthiest communities saw an increase in infant/toddler capacity per 100 children ages 0-5.

All other communities lost capacity. The estimated number of infant/toddler child care slots decreased in every region of the state except Long Island, New York City, and the Mid-Hudson from 2009 to 2018.

- There are only enough regulated child care slots for one out of every four children in the state and when NYC is removed from the analysis, the ratio worsens to one child care slot for every six children.

We recommend: 

2.1 Ending disparities caused by inequitable county-by-county fragmentation. Under New York’s current child care subsidy system, counties make many decisions about subsidy eligibility. This means that a family that is eligible for child care assistance in one county might not qualify in the neighboring county, or they might have to pay more for the exact same child care. New York State should make its child care subsidy system more centralized, fair, and equitable by setting consistent statewide policies and providing the necessary federal/state resources so that the additional costs are not passed on to counties. Specific statewide policies should include:

- Providing child care subsidies for income-eligible families who are unemployed and seeking work, retraining, or pursuing higher education; families involved in domestic violence; families receiving preventive child welfare services; foster families; families experiencing homelessness; and children with special needs consistently statewide;



The Task Force’s vision for equitable access

All children, from birth to school age, will be able to access high-quality child care regardless of income, race, ethnicity, immigration status, geographic location, or ability. To obtain equitable access, the systemic barriers of high cost, disparate quality, and insufficient supply of provider capacity and locations must be addressed.



New York State should make its child care subsidy system more centralized, fair, and equitable by setting consistent statewide policies and providing the necessary federal/state resources so that the additional costs are not passed on to counties.

- Expanding subsidy eligibility to at least 85% of the state median income;
- Reducing parent co-pays to no more than 10% of income over the federal poverty level to match the four counties that already establish co-pays at the 10% threshold (see “The Status of Child Care in the State of New York” for county co-pay levels), as an interim step towards the Task Force’s overall affordability target; and
- Building on the waivers and flexibility the state allowed in response to the pandemic, streamline administrative eligibility criteria and processes and eliminate barriers on the front end so that families can more quickly access child care.
- Allocating operating funding to establish and maintain a specific number of child care slots, especially for infants and toddlers, in high-quality settings in these underserved areas. The state should incentivize the creation of a responsive, diverse provider network in communities with child care shortages by utilizing an enrollment-driven contract-based financing model, so that providers are paid to maintain infant and toddler slots similar to how the state allocates slots for pre-kindergarten or other programs. The state should work with REDCs to use this as an opportunity to evaluate whether contracting for enrollment reduces “child care deserts” and supports families and providers better than the voucher system currently used in most of the state and, if so, expand this approach further.

2.2 Increasing provider capacity in order to eliminate “child care deserts.” New York State officials should work with the Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs) and any future economic development initiatives to determine the scope of each region’s child care deserts, with particular attention to the needs of parents of infants and toddlers. The state should then take responsibility for expanding the supply of high-quality providers in regions identified as “deserts” through a two-part strategy that directly addresses the reasons enough providers are not already operating in these areas:

- Allocating capital funding through the REDCs and any future regional economic development initiatives to expand the number of high-quality slots through the fund described in Recommendation 2.3; and

2.3 Improving fiscal stability for child care providers to give families confidence and stability. The steady and sufficient availability of child care is critical to New York State’s economic stability and growth. But the economic model underpinning child care has long been broken, causing many child care providers to close and leaving others with financial insecurity. Equitable access to child care depends on stabilizing the sector. New York State should:

- **Create a pool of bridge operating funding grants so that existing programs remain open for business.** Bridge grants will prevent further provider shutdowns and the addition of more “child care deserts.” They will also enable providers to retain

financial viability during crises such as COVID-19 or Superstorm Sandy. These resources represent a crucial short-term measure to ensure that additional child care providers are not lost during the transition to a more sustainable child care system.

- **Improve predictability and provider stability.** Over time, New York State should move to an enrollment-based system that relies on contracts with high-quality providers instead of vouchers based on day-to-day attendance to increase stability in the system and simplify access for families, beginning with underserved communities in child care deserts as described in Recommendation 2.2. As an interim statewide step towards this objective, New York State should support families eligible for subsidies and the providers who serve them by paying subsidy for 12 absences per quarter and federal holidays.
- **Support shared services and other efficiencies.** Most child care providers cannot afford to have experts on staff to assist them in improving their operations from a quality and financial perspective. New York State should establish regional infrastructure, working with the Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCRRs), to establish Early Learning Hubs. These hubs would give providers support in screening and curriculum, mental health, business operations, human resources, parenting support, and data analysis. In addition, the hubs would help develop a model for child care provider collaboration for shared staffing, purchasing, and grant

applications. The hubs would provide a combination of free and low-cost assistance to providers.

- **Help meet the capital needs of these small businesses.** New York State should create a child care capital fund to help home- and center-based child care providers pay for critical needs such as roof repair, Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) repairs, driveway repair, technology upgrades, new sinks and toilets, and playground equipment. In addition, as described in Recommendation 2.2, the fund would support new and expanded capacity in “child care deserts.” It is important that the fund include flexibility and offer predictable and reliable resources when providers need it. In addition, New York State should provide unused state properties and college campuses for child care centers at a free or below market rate with additional funding for retrofitting and making the facilities safe and conducive for children.

- **2.4 Eliminating policies that force children out of early childhood care.** Suspensions and expulsions impact even the youngest children in the state, and they disproportionately affect Black children.¹⁸ New York State should commit to eliminating expulsions and suspensions in child care and pre-kindergarten. The state’s strategy should include providing child care and pre-kindergarten programs the resources they need to meet the developmental, mental health, and social-emotional needs of all the children in their care. New York State should set statewide policies on suspensions and expulsions, collect and

make public disaggregated data on exclusionary discipline, and provide child care providers expanded access to early childhood mental health consultants, mentoring, and other supports.

2.5 Engaging employers as a key partner in establishing an affordable and accessible high-quality child care system.

Child care is integral to economic development, and linking child care with existing economic development efforts will strengthen the economy. New York State should:

- **Build on efforts to engage the REDCs to increase the employer voice in child care.** In 2019, the REDCs were asked to address child care as a priority by working with local businesses and communities to identify child care needs and develop potential solutions. This collaboration bridged the gap between the child care sector and the business community. The child care sector is a fundamental backbone of local economies and an important piece when thinking about how regions are going to build back better after the COVID-19 pandemic. New York State should continue to work with the REDCs, and any future economic development initiatives, to:

- ❖ Maintain child care as a state priority to consider when reviewing economic development projects and assessing their region’s economies;
- ❖ Encourage projects to include a child care component in their Consolidated Funding Application, when applicable;

- ❖ Have a permanent child care sector workgroup with relevant members from the field included to help guide and inform regional economic decisions on this topic; and
- ❖ Hold an annual summit on child care and the economy and/or other venues for business leaders to learn more about child care as an essential workforce support and voice their support for the sector.

- **Create a toolkit for employers on why and how to support child care.** New York State should share information with employers on the economic benefits of supporting child care for their business and for the broader economy, and how to effectively support child care. A toolkit for employers should include up-to-date regional data on child care and the economy and innovative solutions.

3 High-Quality Child Care

New York State should ensure that all child care providers effectively support learning and development, and that parents have reliable information about the quality of their child’s program. High-quality early care and education depends on early childhood educators who engage children using developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and linguistically sustaining practices. It is therefore essential that state policy explicitly supports a diverse, skilled, and equitably compensated early care and education workforce as the bedrock of its quality strategy.

The Task Force has made equity the bedrock of all of its recommendations. It is especially important to state explicitly that quality and equity are interdependent: you cannot have one without the other. As the Alliance for Early Success recently explained in its roadmap for post-pandemic child care, “we can achieve quality only if we center equity in our work. This means that neither the child care system as a whole, nor an individual program, can be high-quality if it is not putting principles of equity into policy and practice. It also means lifting up the contributions and value of educators and providers working in all settings...” As the Alliance wrote, quality must be defined so that it will “lead to practices that are culturally and linguistically competent, relevant, and sustaining and responsive to the full range of physical, learning, and developmental strengths and needs of all children.”¹⁹

Key findings: 

- The child care sector is staffed primarily by women (93% of the workforce), and 40% of those 1.5 million workers are women of color.²⁰ Yet the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in 2018 that 15% of the workforce lives below the official poverty line. In New York, at least 65% of the child care workforce is receiving some type of public benefit due to low wages.²¹
- Limited funding for capacity means that only 5% of child care providers serving infants, toddlers, and preschool age children are able to participate in QUALITYstarsNY, the state’s quality rating and improvement system.



The Task Force’s vision for quality

All families will be able to access high-quality child care through providers that effectively support early learning and development; employ and support a diverse, skilled, and equitably compensated early care and education workforce; and meet clear and evidence-based program quality standards that support continuous improvement and make program quality transparent to families.



High-quality early care and education depends on early childhood educators who engage children using developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and linguistically sustaining practices.

We recommend: **3.1 Supporting program quality and providing transparency to families.**

New York State should expect and support all child care providers to meet clear evidence-based program quality standards that advance ongoing professional growth of the workforce and improvements in the learning environment. Program quality must also be transparent to families and the community. These objectives should be accomplished through a universal quality rating and improvement system that is responsive to New York State's diverse settings, geographies, and needs. Quality standards must recognize the value of linguistic and culturally diverse care settings. New York State should build towards this goal through measures that include accelerating the expansion of QUALITYstarsNY, including meaningful investment in helping providers improve and maintain quality, and ensuring on-ramps to QUALITYstarsNY that recognize providers have varying circumstances and starting points. In expanding, QUALITYstarsNY should build on existing strengths and ensure that providers have the support to demonstrate that they meet the quality standards in the most efficient manner possible. A universal quality rating and improvement system will enhance families' decision-making choices and provide comprehensive data for the public and policymakers. And it can be achieved incrementally through annual investments that significantly expand capacity and achieve economies of scale.

3.2 Paying the early childhood workforce fairly.

Persistently low early childhood compensation is a barrier to pay equity and to high-quality child care. Women make up the vast majority of the early childhood workforce, and women of color represent about 40% of early childhood educators. Paying this overwhelmingly female workforce a fair wage is essential to meeting New York's commitment to pay equity. In addition, developing and supporting a diverse, well-prepared, supported, and fairly compensated early childhood workforce across all provider types is vital to ensuring high-quality child care — including reducing turnover, which allows for consistency in care, which is vitally important for young children, and developing a better prepared and more stable workforce. The Task Force recognizes that improving compensation cannot be accomplished by child care providers drawing solely from existing revenue; that low- and moderate-income parents cannot afford to pay more; and that subsidies, at their current reimbursement levels, cannot be stretched any further. This recommendation therefore requires a direct public investment in the workforce. New York State should provide the resources to achieve:

- Entry-level compensation that ensures self-sufficiency, based on standards such as the United Way of New York State's ALICE threshold²² and adjusted for regional cost of living;
- Educator compensation that is commensurate with an individual's qualifications and experience, and that includes a basic benefits package; and

- Compensation that increases appropriately as educators accrue credentials and experience as identified under a career ladder that clearly defines educator qualifications.

3.3

Providing pathways for early childhood educators to advance in their careers and professional learning.

Building on *New York Works for Children*, the state's early childhood professional development system, New York State should provide early childhood educators currently in the field, as well as aspiring educators, with the necessary support to attain the dispositions, skills, and knowledge associated with high-quality early care and learning. Successful implementation requires the following interrelated strategies:

- **Strengthening career pathways.** New York State should provide early childhood educators with access to a coherent career pathway that is equitable, unified, competency-based, and aligned with increased compensation. To meet the needs of the state's diverse early childhood workforce, the career pathway should include numerous on-ramps to advancement and greater proficiency and build on educators' prior experience. Achieving this recommendation requires accelerating and fully funding existing efforts that help educators at different stages of their development and careers, drawing on both public and private resources.
- **Expanding effective professional learning opportunities.** To ensure the early childhood workforce consistently



What early childhood educators need to know and be able to do

The Core Body of Knowledge, which was created in 1984 and issued its third edition in 2012, describes the necessary knowledge, competencies, and dispositions for early childhood education professionals. The Core Body of Knowledge reflects current research and aligns with national professional standards. It is foundational to and informs a more comprehensive approach to professional learning for the early childhood workforce.

implements high-quality practices, New York State should examine and improve current professional development requirements and offerings for educators and program leaders. Important implementation strategies include aligning professional development requirements with the state's Core Body of Knowledge; expanding reflective supervision and coaching, which is an evidence-based way to improve practice; and providing intensive leadership development resources and programs statewide.

- **Improving the infrastructure to provide professional development.** New York State should expand its professional development infrastructure and bring greater coherence to professional development across the state to

ensure early childhood educators and leaders’ have equitable access to quality-assured professional development. Infrastructure improvement should include (a) integrating the Aspire Registry system and the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) licensing and registration process; (b) aligning the OCFS training topic areas with the New York State Core Body of Knowledge; and (c) coordinating the many organizations throughout the state that offer professional learning, coaching, and consultation, including but not limited to the Early Care and Learning Council (ECLC) that represents New York State’s CRRs, New York Association for the Education of Young Children (NYAEYC), QUALITYstarsNY, the New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute (PDI), and the State University of New York Professional Development Program (PDP). To ensure that the professional learning system is meeting the needs of the workforce, New York State should commission a comprehensive statewide workforce survey every three years.



The Task Force’s vision for coordinated systems

High-quality child care will be part of an integrated early care and learning system with consistent and coordinated standards, oversight, and monitoring. There will be coherent and efficient regulations, policies, and procedures that maximize resources, eliminate redundancies, and are child and family focused. There will be clear accountability and transparency based on relevant data and best practice. This integrated system will be easy for families to access and streamlined for providers and oversight entities.

Key finding:



- New York is one of only 16 states that do not have the current or planned ability to link child-level data across early childhood programs to inform policy, support program quality, and provide parents with information.¹³

We recommend:



4.1

Publicly communicating the status and impact of the child care system and New York State’s progress toward achieving the vision and steps proposed by the Task Force. It is important to provide transparency on the status of the child care system and efforts to improve it. New York State should:

4 Coordinated Systems

The success of New York State’s child care system relies on multiple state agencies; counties and local governments; employers and economic development entities; and, of course, the providers themselves. New York State should develop the systems and partnerships to ensure transparency, quality, efficiency, and engagement across all of these stakeholders and with the public the system is intended to serve.



New York State should develop the systems and partnerships to ensure transparency, quality, efficiency, and engagement across all of these stakeholders and with the public the system is intended to serve.

- **Provide a dashboard with data on key child care indicators.** New York State should develop an online dashboard through the Council on Children and Families with data on key indicators including trends in capacity and enrollment. Data should be updated quarterly and be available by county and for each modality of child care providers. Additional indicators should be added as more data becomes available regarding quality, workforce race/ethnicity and other demographics, and cost.
- **Publish a Return on Investment (ROI) study.** Child care provides important health and education returns for the success of children and families, as well as a direct impact on the state's economic well-being. New York State should commission a biennial ROI study that captures overall economic output, number of jobs supported,

earnings generated, and labor force participation as a result of investments in a high-quality, affordable, accessible child care system.

- **Issue regular updates on implementation of the Task Force's recommendations.** Recognizing that the recommendations of the Task Force will take time to fully implement, New York State should issue updates twice per year on the progress made on Task Force recommendations. We recommend that these reports be made available by the Council on Children and Families to the Governor, legislature, and all members of the Task Force.

4.2

Developing a data system to support quality, efficiency, and transparency.

Improving the state's child care system and coordinating among stakeholders is made more difficult by lack of consistent, reliable, and complete information to inform policymakers, providers, and families. New York State should address this challenge in two steps:

- **Establish accurate and consistent data.** New York State should develop a user-friendly platform to capture real-time enrollment and provider capacity information. This system would allow for analysis by state, county, and ZIP code, and include disaggregated data to enable analysis of racial and economic inequities. This platform should be developed rapidly and serve as the foundation for an Early Childhood Integrated Data System.
- **Develop an early childhood integrated data system.** An Early

Childhood Integrated Data System can help the state manage an accountable and effective early childhood system by providing information on early care and education program capacity, usage, and unmet needs, including the early care and education workforce, and on racial, economic and other inequities. Building on the 2019 Data System Feasibility Study, New York State should establish a data governance structure with leadership from each agency that will contribute data, which will then work with internal and external partners including technical and content experts to identify the system’s scope, develop the processes and procedures to ensure data quality and protections, and explore development of a unique identifier for program, educator, and child data components. The system should be designed to integrate with other data sources, including the Child Care Facility System with the Facility Application Management System, Aspire Registry, QUALITYstarsNY, NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services System and criminal history, Child Care Time and Attendance system (CCTA), Benefit Issuance and Control System (BICS) for payment issuance, and Child Care Program Integrity, and ultimately to serve as the source of the data dashboard described in Recommendation 4.1.

4.3 Streamlining and coordinating across agencies to better serve families and child care providers. Because multiple agencies share responsibility for various aspects of early childhood care and learning, child care providers are required

to navigate multiple entities in ways that can feel burdensome or contradictory. New York State should ease the burden for providers while promoting health, safety, and quality by:

- **Reviewing and aligning regulations.** Early childhood providers can face duplicative regulations from different regulatory agencies. For instance, a child care program operating a free pre-kindergarten program may need to be aware of the OCFS health and safety requirements, the quality standards enforced by the NYS State Education Department (NYSED) for Universal Prekindergarten, and requirements from the federal Office of Head Start. Agencies that regulate the same programs can have slight differences in expectations for staff ratios, physical requirements, age cutoffs for children’s birthdays, and quality indicators, among other necessary components. New York State should conduct a formal process to review and align regulations, with updates every five years to ensure that regulations are efficient and achieving their intended purpose.
- **Streamlining monitoring.** New York State should reimagine and align the monitoring and inspection processes among the various regulatory agencies with the goal of supporting programs to provide safe, high-quality care. A uniform protocol (checklist) should be used by all monitoring agencies that includes core items related to assessing the health and safety of early care and education programs and the quality of the programs through agreed-

upon quality indicators aligned with QUALITYstarsNY and consistent with an on-ramp to “Start with STARS.” The monitors, licensors, and registrars should all receive training on this new protocol. This tool would be used across all early care and education programs, making it possible to share data and reduce duplication among multiple agencies that have oversight of a single provider, and would assist in promoting alignment and more efficiencies in the monitoring and inspection process. To further advance this goal, New York State should review and consider all federal guidance that allows for increased collaboration and coordination among early childhood programs, such as child care, Head Start, pre-kindergarten, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program. New York State should also issue uniform and consistent guidance from agencies regarding compliance, violations, and enforcement that focuses on being supportive rather than punitive.

- **Establishing a formal interagency convening of agencies that have regulatory oversight of early care and education programs.** Early care and education experts have been advocating for years for New York State to create a single office for early childhood. Short of that goal, New York State should establish a formal interagency convening to improve alignment and efficiencies and eliminate conflicting requirements and duplication of programs. This recommendation is intended to build on the existing interagency and coordinating role of the Council on

Children and Families, specifically by requiring an early care and education committee among the regulatory oversight agencies, including but not limited to, the NYSED, OCFS, and NYS Department of Health to meet regularly to address and resolve any cross-system issues and barriers to serving young children. Agency representatives should have authority to make decisions for their agencies on these issues.

- **Eliminating redundant background checks.** New York State’s implementation of the federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) comprehensive background checks requirement in September 2019 raised the bar and established a threshold for background check requirements for individuals seeking employment in OCFS and New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC DOHMH)-regulated child care programs. While implementation of these requirements is ongoing, New York State should streamline processes that will support the early childhood system to provide efficiencies and flexibility, increase portability, and reduce administrative burdens by:
 - ❖ Allowing for overall portability for an individual’s fingerprints across the professions, so that once an individual has been fingerprinted that record can follow them and be linked to other oversight entities;
 - ❖ Eliminating the statutory requirement that requires individuals seeking employment in OCFS or NYC DOHMH-regulated

programs to submit multiple clearance forms when they move to a new program;

- ...❖ Exploring the feasibility of making the Statewide Central Register (SCR) a search and retain model; and
- ...❖ Calling upon the federal government to reauthorize CCDGB and amend background check provisions in several areas, including allowing provisionally employed staff to work under supervision pending completion of the comprehensive background check.

4.4 Increasing pre-kindergarten collaboration with community-based organizations. Collaborating with community-based organizations on pre-kindergarten programs ensures the viability of a mixed delivery system and the economic success of child

care businesses while ensuring that families have choices. Many school districts currently receive variances that relieve them from meeting the obligation to contract with community-based organizations for a portion of state-funded pre-k slots. In the 2020-21 school year, there were a total of 451 school districts receiving state funds for pre-kindergarten. Of those 451 school districts, 201 have received collaboration variances. To ensure that school district collaboration with community-based pre-k providers is widespread and that waivers of collaboration requirements are appropriately rare, OCFS should work with NYSED on collaborative options before variances are granted. These agencies should establish that community participation requirements are set sufficiently high to ensure maximal collaboration by increasing the collaboration requirement above its current level of 10% as currently required by Education Law §3602-e.

SUMMARY OF TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

1 CHILD CARE AFFORDABILITY

- 1.1** Set a statewide standard for affordability and enact a path to get there.
- 1.2** Adopt subsidy market rates that reflect the real cost of high-quality child care.
- 1.3** Make phase-in decisions based on racial equity and other equity priorities.
- 1.4** Maximize available funding across all sources.

2 EQUITABLE ACCESS TO CHILD CARE

- 2.1** End disparities caused by inequitable county-by-county fragmentation.
- 2.2** Increase provider capacity in order to eliminate “child care deserts.”
- 2.3** Improve fiscal stability for child care providers to give families confidence and stability.
- 2.4** Eliminate policies that force children out of early childhood care.
- 2.5** Engage employers as a key partner in establishing an affordable and accessible high-quality child care system.



3 HIGH-QUALITY CHILD CARE

- 3.1** Support program quality and provide transparency to families.
- 3.2** Pay the early childhood workforce fairly.
- 3.3** Provide pathways for early childhood educators to advance in their careers and professional learning.

4 COORDINATED SYSTEMS

- 4.1** Publicly communicate the status and impact of the child care system and New York State’s progress toward achieving the vision and steps proposed by the Task Force.
- 4.2** Develop a data system to support quality, efficiency, and transparency.
- 4.3** Streamline and coordinate across agencies to better serve families and child care providers.
- 4.4** Increase pre-kindergarten collaboration with community-based organizations.

THE STATUS OF CHILD CARE IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK

According to a survey of New York parents commissioned by Raising New York, parents of young children are most likely to say they have had to leave, miss, or cut back on work due to child care issues.²⁴ A 2019 study used the American Time Use Data-Set and found that “child care costs at the state level are... a barrier to maternal employment, with mothers reporting lower odds of full-time and higher odds of part-time employment in states with expensive child care.”²⁵ When Washington, D.C. created universal pre-kindergarten, the labor force participation of women with young children increased by 10 percentage points.²⁶ A report from the Council for a Strong America found that, “women who have access to child care subsidies reap many employment-related benefits: They are more likely to work, are able to work longer hours, have more stable employment and earn more.”²⁷



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Labor Force Status Due to Child Care Problems (16 Years and Over) New York State

| | Estimate | Percent of Population | Percent of Labor Force |
|---|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Civilian Noninstitutional Population | 15,971,600 | 100.0% | |
| Civilian Labor Force | 9,703,900 | 60.8% | 100.0% |
| Employed | 9,302,000 | 58.2% | 95.9% |
| Full Time | 7,717,100 | 48.3% | 79.5% |
| Part Time | 1,584,900 | 9.9% | 16.3% |
| Working Part Time Due to Child Care Problems | 87,000 | 0.5% | 0.9% |
| Unemployed | 401,900 | 2.5% | 4.1% |
| Not in Labor Force | 6,267,700 | 39.2% | |
| Not Looking for Work Due to Child Care Problems | 5,600 | < 0.1% | |

Source: 2018 Annual Average Current Population Survey (CPS) Data.

Increasing maternal work force participation is not a symbolic victory; rather, there are economic multiplier effects in regard to return on investment. Quebec was able to increase its income tax revenue after implementing a universal child care program, as its maternal labor force participation rate increased.²⁸ An estimate from the Economic Policy Institute found that capping child care expenditures at 10% of a families' income would have an increased effect on the Gross State Product for families with an infant of 1.6%, which translates to \$22.5 billion.²⁹ Nationally, this would be an increase in the Gross Domestic Product of 1.2%, equal to \$210.2 billion.³⁰

The economic multiplier effects also apply to the next generation. A study published in 2010 followed 1,300 children who were born in 1991 and found that "children in higher-quality child care were better prepared for school at age four compared to children in lower-quality child care. At age 15, they were still performing slightly above their peers and also had significantly lower levels of behavior problems at age 15 compared to children in lower-quality child care."³¹ A study of North Carolina's early childhood programs found that children in

“Increasing maternal work force participation is not a symbolic victory; rather, there are economic multiplier effects in regard to return on investment.”

“In summary, child care allows all other industries to exist. Demand for child care is relatively inelastic. While people have to work, and people have children, there will need to be child care.”

counties that spent more per child were two months ahead in reading than counties who spend less.³²

In addition, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting women at a greater rate than men, as 80% of the workers who left the workforce in September 2020 were women (865,000 women left the workforce compared to 216,000 men).³³ Moreover, many economists are predicting the pandemic could set women back years.

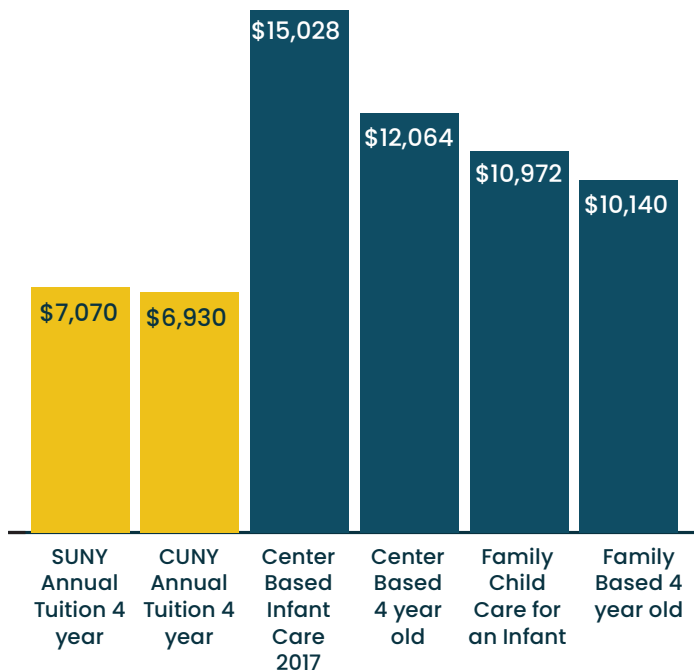
In summary, child care allows all other industries to exist. Demand for child care is relatively inelastic. While people have to work, and people have children, there will need to be child care. Past recessions have demonstrated the importance of child care as an economic recovery tool. In fact, a study by Cornell University reported that states that used American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds for child care more effectively stimulated the economy than other uses. The study further concluded that using ARRA

funds for child care would have been a more effective means to stimulate economic expansion during the recession of 2008–09, confirming once again that the linkages of child care to the state’s economy is larger than that of other sectors.³⁴

Affordability

The Child Care Availability Task Force was specifically tasked to examine the cost of care for families and factors that contribute to such costs. Research has found that child care costs more than college at a public four-year university in most states. In fact, in New York State, one year of tuition for infant care at a child care center is more than double of cost of tuition at a SUNY comprehensive four-year college.³⁵

Average Annual Cost



Source: Child Care Aware “U.S. and the High Cost of Child Care.” 2018. <https://info.childcareaware.org/hubfs/appendices%2010.19.18.pdf>

State University of New York. “Fast Facts.” January, 2019. <https://www.suny.edu/about/fast-facts/>

City University of New York. “Tuition and Fees.” Fall 2019. <https://www.cuny.edu/financial-aid/tuition-and-college-costs/tuition-fees/#undergraduate-tuition>

Even one of the most affordable full-time child care options, family-based care for four-year old children, is more than 140% of a full year of public college tuition. Unfortunately for families, this is without the 18 years of saving and planning to afford these costs, and there are much fewer options for financial assistance for child care.

Another way to look at the cost of child care is to examine how much of a family’s annual income must go to care. According to Child Care Aware,³⁶ in New York, the average care for one infant costs 55% of a single parent household’s median income, and 15% of a married couple’s median income.³⁷ Since there is very little economy of scale with child care, you can double these amounts for families with more than one child. Compare this with the U.S Department of Health and Human Services affordability standard that child care should not cost more than 7% of a family’s income.³⁸

Explicitly looking at family household expenditures, child care is a major expense in family budgets, often exceeding the cost of housing, food, and transportation. Unlike all other areas of education investment, families pay the majority of costs for early education.

Parents seeking infant and toddler care are expected to foot the highest bill. Lower teacher-child ratios mean employing more teachers without adding children and revenue to cover the increased cost. Providers typically offset the high cost of infant care with pre-kindergarten and after-school programming that supports larger class sizes and teacher to staff ratios. When providers are challenged



Parents seeking infant and toddler care are expected to foot the highest bill. Lower teacher-child ratios mean employing more teachers without adding children and revenue to cover the increased cost.

with balancing operating budgets, often infant and toddler classrooms are the first to be closed, further contributing to the significant shortage of licensed slots. Parents not only feel the burden of paying a high cost for care, but also face long wait lists for infant and toddler care specifically.

Child care affects all working parents regardless of their income. It is the options that are available to working parents — primarily mothers — that varies greatly depending on the income and resources of each family. For some, it makes more financial sense for one parent to stop working and stay home with the kids. For single parents, low-wage families, and families of color, this is often not an option. Without adequate financial assistance, these families are left with untenable decisions.

While there are some child care subsidies available, these are only for families with very low incomes, leaving the majority of New York families on their own. Even a small increase in wages, such as a \$1 per hour raise, can push a family out of eligibility and end up creating

thousands of dollars in new expenses for child care. For families in this situation, that raise in wages is not worth it. In addition, subsidies are not currently available for every family that qualifies for one.

New York's county-administered child care subsidy system allows for significant county variations in how, and to whom, subsidies are provided. Because there is insufficient funding to allow counties to provide child care subsidies to all eligible families that need it, counties have long been forced to make difficult choices as to who receives a subsidy. This has resulted in sharp disparities in access



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among some of New York’s struggling families. Among categories of eligible families that may be granted a subsidy in one county, but denied in another: families experiencing homelessness and domestic violence, foster families, and parents who are engaged in a job search or job training. At the same time, income eligibility limits and family co-

pays can vary significantly among counties, leading to situations in which families experience a considerable increase in their co-pay, or even lose their subsidy altogether, if they move from one county to another. See the table below for the differences by county in child care subsidy family share, also referred to as family co-pays:

NEW YORK STATE SOCIAL SERVICES DISTRICT SUBSIDY CO-PAY DIFFERENCES BY COUNTY

| County | 2019 Family Share - percentage of income over Federal Poverty Level | County | 2019 Family Share - percentage of income over Federal Poverty Level | County | 2019 Family Share - percentage of income over Federal Poverty Level |
|-------------|---|------------|---|----------------|---|
| Albany | 25% | Herkimer | 35% | Saint Lawrence | 20% |
| Allegany | 20% | Jefferson | 25% | Saratoga | 35% |
| Broome | 25% | Lewis | 25% | Schenectady | 35% |
| Cattaraugus | 10% | Livingston | 10% | Schoharie | 15% |
| Cayuga | 20% | Madison | 25% | Schuyler | 35% |
| Chautauqua | 20% | Monroe | 25% | Seneca | 15% |
| Chemung | 25% | Montgomery | 35% | Steuben | 10% |
| Chenango | 35% | Nassau | 20% | Suffolk | 20% |
| Clinton | 20% | NYC | 35% | Sullivan | 35% |
| Columbia | 10% | Niagara | 20% | Tioga | 35% |
| Cortland | 35% | Oneida | 25% | Tompkins | 20% |
| Delaware | 25% | Onondaga | 35% | Ulster | 25% |
| Dutchess | 30% | Ontario | 20% | Warren | 25% |
| Erie | 35% | Orange | 35% | Washington | 25% |
| Essex | 20% | Orleans | 35% | Wayne | 25% |
| Franklin | 25% | Oswego | 15% | Westchester | 27% |
| Fulton | 35% | Otsego | 30% | Wyoming | 35% |
| Genesee | 35% | Putnam | 20% | Yates | 35% |
| Greene | 35% | Rensselaer | 25% | | |
| Hamilton | 25% | Rockland | 25% | | |

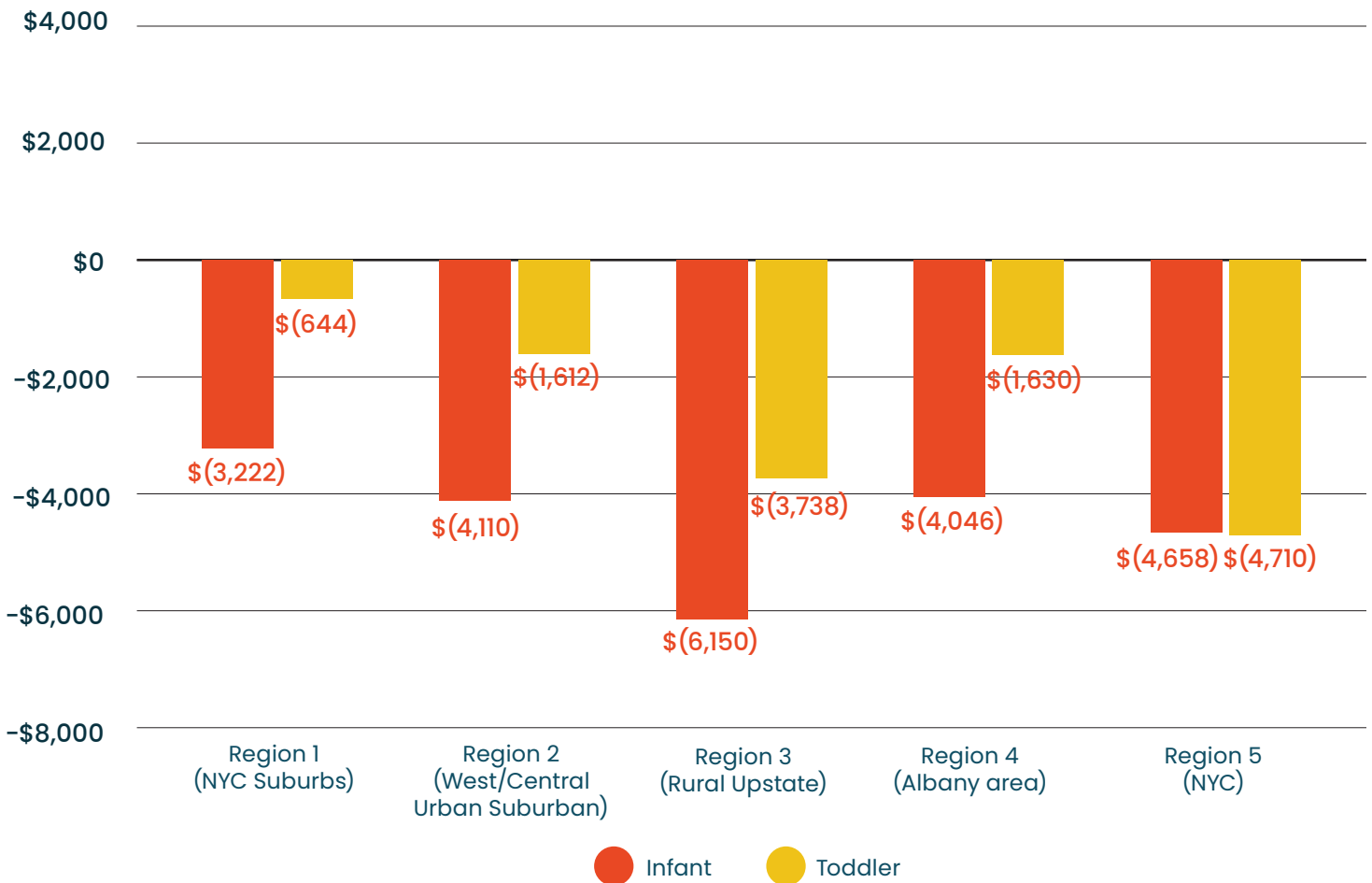
Cost of Care

In 2019, Raising NY partnered with the Center for American Progress to conduct a true cost of care study in order to help inform what it would cost to support a high-quality child care model. Currently, child care subsidy costs are determined by the market rate survey, which is a survey of amounts that private-pay families pay for child care, rather than the true cost to a program to provide that care. In New York, the market rate percentiles are set at 69%, representing the idea that a subsidy-eligible family would have access to 69% of the child care market. Instead, the cost of care study is

based on determining not how much families pay, but how much the service costs to provide – and is predicated on the idea that especially for the youngest children, the cost of care may be more than what families pay for it.

This study found that, “the size of the gap between subsidy rates and the true cost of quality varies by region, but exists across the state for infants and toddlers” and that “in family child care homes, subsidy rates are insufficient to support a living wage for the provider.”³⁹

Scenario 1: Gap between subsidy and estimated cost Child Care Center



Source: Center for American Progress commissioned by Raising NY.

The Task Force also looked at early childhood educator and provider salaries:

| Annual Average Wage Child Day Care Services By Labor Market Region, 2013–2018 | | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Region | 2013 | 2018 | Net Change | % Change |
| Statewide | \$24,002 | \$27,466 | +\$3,464 | +14.4% |
| Downstate | \$25,983 | \$29,372 | +\$3,389 | +13.0% |
| Upstate | \$18,419 | \$21,488 | +\$3,069 | +16.7% |
| Capital | \$20,553 | \$22,389 | +\$1,836 | +8.9% |
| Central New York | \$19,270 | \$23,678 | +\$4,408 | +22.9% |
| Finger Lakes | \$18,758 | \$22,328 | +\$3,570 | +19.0% |
| Hudson Valley | \$22,340 | \$23,959 | +\$1,619 | +7.2% |
| Long Island | \$21,013 | \$22,644 | +\$1,631 | +7.8% |
| Mohawk Valley | \$16,936 | \$20,105 | +\$3,169 | +18.7% |
| New York City | \$28,774 | \$32,874 | +\$4,100 | +14.2% |
| North Country | \$16,515 | \$20,384 | +\$3,869 | +23.4% |
| Southern Tier | \$17,513 | \$21,092 | +\$3,579 | +20.4% |
| Western New York | \$16,982 | \$19,745 | +\$2,763 | +16.3% |

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Note: Regions may not add up to statewide total due to employment whose region is unknown.

In New York, according to the Center for American Progress, “if early childhood educators were paid comparable wages to K-12 teachers, the annual cost of infant care would be between \$28,000 and \$37,500 in a child care center, and between \$22,000 and \$29,000 in a family child care home.”⁴⁰ In fact, instead, it is estimated that 65% of child care providers receive such low wages that they are eligible for several social safety net programs such as food stamps or Medicaid.⁴¹

The Center for American Progress, NY Cost of Quality Study, shows 70% of expenses in a child care program are related to personnel.⁴² These are fixed costs, with staffing ratios, facility and space, training and other

requirements mandated by state regulation in order to ensure the safety and well-being of children. Child care programs do not have the ability to significantly lower their cost drivers, nor can they increase their rates beyond what parents can afford to pay. The result is a low-wage workforce.

This is the main crux of why child care is in crisis: Private-pay families cannot afford to pay more (with child care tuition costing more than college), subsidy rates do not cover the cost of care, and there is little to no room to reduce expenses, so much of the child care workforce lives in poverty, earning just above minimum wage.

Non-Traditional Hours

Despite the majority of low-income workers working non-traditional hours, there are few non-traditional care opportunities within the regulated child care system, leaving families to reach out exclusively to informal care settings, also referred to as family, friend, and neighbor care. In Pennsylvania, the non-profit Research For Action estimates that there are fewer than 50,000 non-traditional hour child care slots, compared to the 150,000 families that need them.⁴³

In 2019, the Council on Children and Families partnered with SUNY Center for Human Services Research to produce a comprehensive Preschool Development Grant Birth—Five Needs Assessment and found that only 9.1% of regulated child care programs in New York State (excluding NYC child care centers) offered non-traditional hours.⁴⁴

Availability of Child Care by Economic Development Region and Child Care Deserts

New York State currently has 1.35 million children under the age of 6, with nearly half living in New York City:

Population of Children Under 6 in Households*
New York State and Regions
2013 and 2018

| Region | 2013 | 2018 | Change | Percent Change |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|
| New York State | 1,397,965 | 1,345,720 | -52,245 | -3.7% |
| Capital Region | 66,734 | 63,211 | -3,523 | -5.3% |
| Central New York | 53,048 | 52,641 | -407 | -0.8% |
| Finger Lakes | 79,633 | 76,620 | -3,013 | -3.8% |
| Hudson Valley | 164,781 | 159,858 | -4,923 | -3.0% |
| Long Island | 185,440 | 184,277 | -1,163 | -0.6% |
| Mohawk Valley | 31,336 | 30,380 | -956 | -3.1% |
| New York City | 656,079 | 622,572 | -33,507 | -5.1% |
| North Country | 31,947 | 28,466 | -3,481 | -10.9% |
| Southern Tier | 39,611 | 38,927 | -684 | -1.7% |
| Western New York | 89,356 | 88,768 | -588 | -0.7% |

Source: 2013 and 2018 ACS Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 1-Year Estimates.

*Groups quarters such as orphanages are excluded.

Even if child care were more affordable for all families, there would likely still be a shortage. The Child Care Availability Task Force conducted an analysis on the number of licensed and registered child care slots in the State of New York versus the number of children in the State under the age of 14. This analysis found that there are only enough licensed and registered child care slots for one out of every four children in the state. However, when New York City is removed from the analysis, the ratio worsens to more than one in six.

According to the Center for American Progress, a child care desert is any census tract with more than 50 children under age 5 that contains either no child care providers or so few options that there are more than three times as many children as licensed child care slots. By this metric, 64% of New Yorkers live in child care deserts.⁴⁵

Deserts are most common in rural and low-income areas. Thus, in New York, a regional approach to determining the modality of care may be most successful. To meet community need, child care must continue to be provided in many forms and must be responsive to community preference with funding from both public and private entities. For instance, in the North Country Regional Economic Development Council Strategic Plan for 2019, the Council suggested that child care centers have not been successful in the region due to transportation challenges and long commutes to care, so that region would favor home-based care.

In New York, every region of the State had at least one Census area that would be considered a child care desert. This effect is even more pronounced for infants and toddlers. More than 95% of counties would be considered infant-toddler child care deserts.

“

In New York, every region of the State had at least one Census area that would be considered a child care desert. This effect is even more pronounced for infants and toddlers.

Research from Raising NY found that there is a significant shortage of slots available for infants and toddlers, and troublingly, the number of infant and toddler slots is decreasing. The survey results found that, “Seven out of 10 child care centers and half of family child care providers are at maximum capacity for infants. Most child care centers and nearly half of all providers have a wait list.”⁴⁶ In addition, they write, “From 2011 to 2017, only the top 20% wealthiest communities saw an increase in estimated infant/toddler capacity per 100 children ages 0–5. All other communities lost capacity, including low-income communities, middle-income communities, and even mid-high income communities – reinforcing that access to child care is a statewide problem.”⁴⁷ In Rochester, The Children’s Agenda found that, pre-COVID, there were only 959 slots available for 9,000 children under age 3 in the City. Not having an adequate supply of infant/toddler care has serious implications for economic success. A recent survey found that 77% of parents of young children experienced negative impacts to their career or that of a family member because of child care considerations. These

considerations and challenges have only increased during the pandemic, and have disproportionately impacted the ability of women to remain in the workforce.

Quality of Care

The quality of child care is just as important as expanding access and affordability and goes beyond health and safety requirements. In New York, there are multiple parts of the system that are tasked with improving and supporting quality in all child care settings. CCRR agencies provide technical assistance, training, professional development, and coaching to thousands of child care programs throughout the state. Other statewide organizations such as the NYAEYC, QUALITYstarsNY, CUNY’s PDI, ECLC, the Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Center, and Prevent Child Abuse NY (PCANY) also offer a host of professional development options for child care workers. Regional efforts often bring together the various resources to meet the specific needs of their communities.

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), a strategy currently deployed in 44 states to varying degrees, provide a systematic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the quality of early childhood programs. QRIS help states make quality comparable across programs and settings, align the technical assistance infrastructure to more effectively support quality improvement, and collect better data to inform policy decisions. New York’s QRIS, QUALITYstarsNY, has the goal of coordinating these resources and creating a transparent mechanism to measure and improve quality of early childhood programs.

QUALITYstarsNY, piloted in 2010 and implemented in 2012 by CUNY’s PDI under

the guidance of the Governor’s Early Childhood Advisory Council and funded by the New York State Council on Children and Families, OCFS, and NYSED, works with over 700 participating early care and education programs. QUALITYstarsNY assists early childhood programs to achieve the best possible outcomes for children by facilitating a continuous quality improvement process through a wide variety of supports to early childhood professionals.

Compared to other states, the density of provider participation in New York is among the lowest, largely due to insufficient funding to scale the program, and a lack of financial incentives and rewards to providers for participation. While participating providers are free to share their ratings if they like, the system itself does not yet make ratings public — while the low level of provider participation sharply limits the usefulness of quality ratings for families comparing their care options.

While there are a variety of resources in New York to promote quality, there is much work to be done to elevate and appropriately support the workforce, ensure high quality practice throughout all programs, and strengthen the state’s quality infrastructure to create greater transparency and efficacy.

Impact of COVID-19

While previously the child care system had been mostly patchworked through a combination of very limited governmental subsidies for families in poverty and private tuition, the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed that child care must be factored in as an important piece of economic recovery and infrastructure development. Ellen Galinsky, president of the Families and Work Institute, called child care an “invisible part of the

economy."⁴⁸ However, this pandemic has lifted the invisibility cloak, demonstrating how vital child care is.

New York State did not close child care programs that the state licenses and oversees during COVID-19 (in New York City, however, the mayor closed many center-based child care programs in the spring and allowed them to reopen beginning in mid-summer). Rather, child care providers were designated as essential services through executive order 202.6. Over 65% of OCFS licensed child care providers stayed open during the spring. In May 2020, OCFS interviewed 13,000 child care providers in New York regarding the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on their program. Providers reported that for programs that remained open, they were serving an average of 30% of their licensed capacity, which is not enough to remain fiscally viable. Recent research shows an average of 26 programs (mostly home-based) closing per week, as opposed to a much smaller number of closures per week for the same time a year ago. Net closures are over 500 programs this year, as opposed to 200 or so last year (excluding New York City).

Thus, it is more important than ever that child care programs are sustainable and able to thrive during this recovery period. Only 30% of child care providers surveyed could survive a two-week closure without support, according to the National Association for the Education of Young Children.⁴⁹ Research from Georgia suggests that a weakened network of child care providers will slow down the economic recovery,⁵⁰ proving once again just how vital the child care industry is for a foundational underpinning of the economy.

On April 15, 2020 New York was awarded \$163.6 million from the federal Coronavirus Aid,

Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act for child care. This funding was allocated in three distinct stages to address urgent needs. In April, the first tranche of CARES funding was dedicated to emergency response: \$10 million for supplies for open programs and \$20 million to support child care tuition costs for essential employees with incomes below 300% of the poverty line. These funds supported over 6,000 families' child care costs from April to June.

In June, the Department of Health released emergency guidance for social distancing in child care and camp programs, including a reduced maximum group size. In order to augment economic recovery and to support working families, OCFS allocated \$20 million for restructuring/reopening grants for providers that were open or reopening, and \$45 million to support providers that were going to reopen or expand the number of children being served through temporary operating support grants. Nearly 4,000 providers were awarded grant funds through this program in every region of the state.

Before the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, OCFS issued emergency regulations allowing child care providers to provide child care and receive subsidy for school-aged children during the school day if the child was participating in remote learning. The final tranche of the CARES funding was to support providers and families as the school year started by allocating \$20 million for additional essential worker scholarships, \$20 million for another round of restructuring/reopening, \$28.6 million for another round of temporary operating support grants, and \$20 million in short-term rental assistance for providers that had been displaced from their location due to COVID-19.

Business incentives to increase child care access

The child care sector has a return on investment of \$1.86 for every dollar spent – more than manufacturing, retail, and construction – and this money stays and is spent in local communities.⁵¹ Child care programs are small businesses themselves, and they are essential to ensuring that New York State’s infrastructure remains solid.

Understanding the importance of child care to New York’s economy, Governor Cuomo in his 2019 State of the State Address made child care a priority for the REDCs and directed them to consider creative solutions to solving the child care crisis in their region. As a result of this action, \$8,795,000 was awarded to 16 projects for direct child care projects, and an additional \$7,350,000 was awarded to four projects that have a child care component. Additionally, the 2019–20 enacted budget created the NYS Employer-Provided Child Care Credit, which allows employers to take a credit for qualifying expenditures paid or incurred in providing child care alternatives for their employees. The credit is equal to 25% of qualified child care expenditures related to a child care facility located within the state, plus 10% of qualified child care resources and referral expenditures; it is capped at \$150,000 per taxable year.

CONCLUSION: BUILDING BACK BETTER

We advance these recommendations with our eyes wide open to the extraordinary public health, political and financial challenges facing New York. However, **now** is the time to build New York's child care system back better.

Decades of treating, and funding child care as a private service rather than a public good in New York – and around the nation – has left the system teetering on collapse, propped up in large part by underpaying the workforce, one that is overwhelmingly populated by women, largely women of color, who are paid wages that leave the majority in near poverty. The extraordinary stressors of the pandemic have strained New York's fragile system to

its breaking point. It has also exposed, and further weakened, many of the longstanding fractures in New York's system, chief among them being the wide – and unfair – variations in subsidy eligibility and family contribution, across New York's 58 social services districts, which administer the subsidy system.

There is, however, opportunity on the horizon. The new year will bring a new federal administration, widespread distribution of a vaccine, and new federal relief dollars. The new year will be a time for rebuilding. These recommendations are a plan for rebuilding New York's child care system to emerge as the best in the nation.

CHILD CARE AVAILABILITY TASK FORCE STATUTE

Social Services Law

§ 390-k. Child care availability taskforce. 1. There shall be established within the office of children and family services a child care taskforce for the purpose of evaluating the need for and availability of child care throughout the state.

2. The taskforce shall be chaired by a representative of the executive chamber and the commissioners of the office of children and family services and the department of labor, or their designees. Members of the taskforce shall serve without compensation for three year terms, but may be reimbursed for actual costs incurred for participation on such taskforce. Ensuring adequate geographic representation, members of the taskforce shall be appointed by the governor and comprised as follows:

(a) three individuals shall be appointed upon the recommendation of the speaker of the assembly, at least one of whom shall be a parent who has utilized subsidized child care;

(b) three individuals shall be appointed upon the recommendation of the temporary president of the senate, at least one of whom shall be a parent who has utilized subsidized child care;

(c) two representatives of a child care resource and referral agency;

(d) two representatives of home-based child care providers;

(e) two representatives of center-based child care providers;

(f) two representatives from the business community;

(g) two representatives from unions that represent child care providers; and

(h) at least one representative from each of the following entities:

(i) the office of temporary and disability assistance;

(ii) the council on children and families;

(iii) the department of taxation and finance;

(iv) a regional economic development council;

(v) the state university of New York or the city university of New York;

(vi) the state education department;

(vii) the early childhood advisory council;

(viii) a social service district or county government or an entity that advocates on behalf of social services or county governments; and

(ix) a non-profit child care advocacy organization.

3. The taskforce shall examine the following:

(a) affordable child care with a focus on the cost of care for families and factors that contribute to such costs;

(b) access to and availability of subsidized child care, including the identification of barriers families eligible under state law face obtaining or utilizing such subsidies;

(c) availability of child care for non-traditional work hours;

(d) whether parents are voluntarily leaving the workforce due to lack of affordable or accessible child care, and the demographic information of such parents, if known;

(e) whether employers have identified lack of child care as a reason for a shortage of a qualified workforce;

(f) the impact of child care, or lack thereof, on economic development throughout the state;

(g) varying levels of quality of care throughout the state;

(h) availability of quality child care by economic development region including identification of underserved communities;

(i) whether regulatory or statutory changes could promote access to child care and improve health and safety standards in child care programs;

(j) business incentives to increase child care access and the impact on tax credits and deductions relating to child care;

(k) ways to address concerns identified in the course of the examination required by this subdivision; and

(l) anything else the taskforce deems necessary.

4. The taskforce shall report its interim findings and recommendations in accordance with subdivision three of this section to the governor, the speaker of the assembly and the temporary president of the senate no later than November first, two thousand eighteen and its final findings and recommendations no later than December thirty-first, two thousand twenty.

APPENDIX B

Appointed Members of the New York State Child Care Availability Task Force

KATHY HOCHUL, Task Force Co-Chair
Lieutenant Governor
State of New York

SHEILA POOLE, Task Force Co-Chair
Commissioner
NYS Office of Children and Family Services

ROBERTA REARDON, Task Force Co-Chair
Commissioner
NYS Department of Labor

MELISSA DEROSA
Secretary to the Governor
Executive Chamber Representative

ANDREA ANTHONY
Executive Director
Day Care Council of New York

HEATHER C. BRICCETTI
President and CEO
Business Council of New York State

SONJA BROWN
Regional Director
Lower Hudson Valley Workforce Development
Institute

JADA CALLAHAN
Parent

MEREDITH MENZIES CHIMENTO
Executive Director
Early Care and Learning Council

HILDA ESCHER
CEO
Ibero American Action League
Member
Finger Lakes REDC

ANNE GOLDMAN
*Vice President for Non-Department of
Education members*
United Federation of Teachers

MIKE HEIN
Commissioner
Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

DEDE HILL
Director of Policy
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy

KRISTEN KERR
Executive Director
NYAEYC

SUE KOWALESKI
Board Member
Family Child Care Association of New York
Coordinator
Southern Adirondack Child Care Network

TIFFANY MALONE
Owner/Operator
ABC Learn and Play

LARRY MARX
CEO
The Children's Agenda

YOLANDA MCBRIDE
Director of Public Policy
Children's Aid

SARAH G. MERRICK
Commissioner
Onondaga County Department of Social Services

JENN O'CONNOR
Director of Policy and Advocacy
Prevent Child Abuse New York

RENEE RIDER

Executive Director
New York State Council on Children and Families

JENNIFER L. MARINO ROJAS

Executive Director
Child Care Council of Suffolk, Inc.

BETTY A. ROSA

Interim Commissioner
NYS Education Department

IAN ROSENBLUM

Executive Director
The Education Trust–New York

SHERI L. SCAVONE

Executive Director
Western New York Women’s Foundation

MICHAEL SCHMIDT

Commissioner
Department of Tax & Finance

ELIZABETH (BETH) STARKS

Executive Director
Chautauqua Lake Child Care Center

KATE TARRANT, EdD

Director of Research
New York Early Childhood Professional
Development Institute, CUNY

KELLY L. TOBIN

Executive Director
YWCA of Cortland County

The work of the Task Force greatly benefited from the support of:

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JASON BRESLIN, New York State Education Department

ROANN DESTITO, Office of General Services

DESYLVIA DWYER, New York State Education Department (retired)

ERIN FITZPATRICK, New York State Division of the Budget

JAMIE FRANK, Office of Children and Family Services

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KEVIN HANNEL, Department of Labor

JIM HART, Office of Children and Family Services

MIKE HEIN, Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

EMILY KADAR, Executive Chamber

FRANCINA KITCHEN-HILL, Department of Labor

MEG MCNIFF, New York State Education Department

JANICE MOLNAR, Office of Children and Family Services

AMBER MOONEY, The Business Council of New York State

REBECCA MUDIE, Executive Chamber

KERRI NEIFELD, Executive Chamber

KELLI OWENS, Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

MONIQUE OWENS, Executive Chamber

SCOTT PALLADINO, Department of Taxation and Finance, Deputy Commission Tax Policy Analysis

KRISTIN WELLER, New York State Council on Children and Families

DAVID WRIGHT, Executive Chamber

May 18, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York
The Capitol
Albany, NY

Dear Governor Cuomo:

The New York State Child Care Availability Task Force is eager to support your leadership in reopening New York safely, smartly, and with an eye to the future. Among the many vital needs of New Yorkers in this period is access to safe, affordable, quality child care.

We write to provide specific recommendations that will enable the State to safely reopen while building a stronger, more equitable future. Mindful of the extraordinary budget challenges New York is facing, we suggest funding these recommendations using remaining federal CARES Act and exploring additional federal and state resources.

IMMEDIATE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure Sufficient Child Care Capacity to Serve Families of Essential Workers and Other Vulnerable Families. The majority of New York's 15,512 licensed or registered child care businesses (many minority- and women-owned) remain open and willing to care for the children of essential workers, often at significant personal risk. One in four programs outside of New York City (where all child care centers were required to close) closed due to concerns about health and safety, or because they did not have sufficient children present to remain financially viable. Successful statewide reopening cannot be accomplished without restoring and sustaining capacity. We recommend that New York State:

- Provide monthly emergency operating grants so that existing programs can remain financially viable with the recommended smaller group sizes, lower capacity, and other safety and quality measures in place.
- Offer training, guidance, and hands-on, personalized technical assistance on how to provide care safely; observe evolving health and safety standards, as well as offer mental health supports for providers.
- Allocate capital investments to fund social distancing measures, such as additional room separators, partitions for nap time, etc.
- Provide the essential child care workforce enhanced compensation – including increased pay, retention incentives, and prioritized child care subsidies – to retain and support those working during the pandemic.

- Improve data collection processes to obtain real-time snapshots of enrollment and vacancies that will help planning and allocation of resources.

2. Support Families of Essential Workers and Other Vulnerable Families. Now that the CARES Act emergency tuition scholarships have been in place for several weeks, it is clear that the allocation could reach more essential workers in conjunction with the increase in subsidy eligibility in many counties. We recommend that New York State:

- Expand the scholarships to reach more essential workers and those who will be returning to work under the NY Forward plan by increasing income eligibility to at least 500% FPL, allowing workers from each phase of the reopening plan to become eligible, and continuing the scholarships through at least the end of the summer.
- Ensure that counties provide child care subsidy to families involved in child welfare, foster families, and children with special needs consistently statewide.
- In light of the unprecedented unemployment, ensure that families who are seeking employment and/or participating in job training are able to consistently access subsidies or scholarships in all counties.

3. Ensure the Safety of New York’s Children and the Child Care Workforce. Child care programs need expert guidance on how to effectively and realistically keep children and staff safe. We recommend that New York State:

- Provide programs the most up-to-date information about the impact of COVID-19 on children, offering direct access to public health officials, and issuing clear and consistent guidance on procedures, policies, and mandates.
- Collect data on the number of providers and children in group child care settings who become ill and how many programs are forced to close due to the spread of the virus; constantly revise safety practices as the data dictates.
- Offer public education to parents in multiple languages regarding health and safety measures in programs to increase confidence in care.

SUPPORTING NEW YORK’S REOPENING & BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

The Task Force believes that support should be directed to existing child care programs first. In areas of New York where there is not sufficient child care available, the State should use federal funds to provide start-up grants for new high-quality capacity. There are also opportunities to streamline the child care subsidy process more generally, learning from the CARES Act scholarship process.

Over the longer-term, we believe that county variations in subsidy eligibility and co-pays should be eliminated during this period of recovery and beyond, and that all counties should offer subsidies to families earning up to 85% of state median income, which we acknowledge requires additional funding sources than we are addressing in these immediate recommendations.

In closing, we recognize that a plan to reopen businesses requires consideration of the needs of working parents, especially with schools closed and summer camps potentially not fully operational. Child care, schools, businesses, and families are interconnected; none can function without the others. **Therefore, we also recommend that child care stakeholders be included in all regional and statewide reopening planning bodies.** We are eager to provide additional information and support as New York reopens.

Sincerely,



Sheila Poole
 NYS Office of Children and Family
 Services Commissioner
 Task Force Co-Chair



Roberta Reardon
 NYS Department of Labor
 Commissioner
 Task Force Co-Chair

Appointed Members of the Task Force

Andrea Anthony
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 Day Care Council of New York

Heather C. Briccetti
 President and CEO
 Business Council of New York State

Meredith Menzies Chimento
 Executive Director
 Early Care and Learning Council

Hilda Escher
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 Ibero American Action League
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Dede Hill
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Kristen Kerr
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Sue Kowaleski
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Family Child Care Association of New York Coordinator, Southern Adirondack Child
Care Network

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Executive Director
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Kate Tarrant, EdD
Director of Research
New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, CUNY

Kelly L. Tobin
Executive Director
YWCA of Cortland County

APPENDIX D

TASK FORCE PROCESS AND MEETINGS

As part of his Women’s Agenda, Governor Cuomo launched the Child Care Availability Task Force (Task Force) in December 2018. Since then, the Task Force has developed a comprehensive plan to make quality child care affordable and accessible for all New Yorkers. This report articulates the Task Force’s priorities and includes a set of recommendations to make child care affordable and accessible to New York families.

Pursuant to New York State Social Services Law 390-k, the Task Force was charged with examining and exploring innovative approaches to affordability and access to child care. The first convening of the Task Force was held in December 2018 co-chaired by the Lieutenant Governor, Kathy Hochul; Commissioner of the Office of Children and Family Services Sheila Poole; and the Commissioner of the Department of Labor Roberta Reardon.

Since that meeting in December 2018, the Task Force has met regularly and based its work on the overarching premise that children from birth through school age regardless of income, race, ethnicity, immigration status, geographic location, or ability should have equitable access to high quality child care that is affordable for their families.

The Task Force held full meetings on the following dates:

| Meeting Date | Location |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| December 18, 2018 | Albany, NY |
| February 12, 2019 | Albany, NY |
| March 8, 2019 | Albany, NY |
| April 9, 2019 | Albany, NY |
| May 20, 2019 | Albany, NY |
| July 15-16 2019 | Albany, NY |
| August 19-20, 2019 | Albany, NY |
| October 28, 2019 | Albany, NY |
| December 16-17, 2019 | Albany, NY |
| February 25, 2020 | Albany, NY |
| May 7, 2020 | Virtual Meeting |
| May 14, 2020 | Virtual Meeting |
| June 1, 2020 | Virtual Meeting |
| June 29, 2020 | Virtual Meeting |
| July 29, 2020 | Virtual Meeting |
| September 3, 2020 | Virtual Meeting |

In addition, to advance the work, the Task Force worked in smaller work groups to explore child care challenges and opportunities in New York State. The work groups were a primary locus of recommendation generation. All Task Force members were engaged in the discussion and refinement of recommendations through a general consensus model.

The NYS Child Care Availability Task Force was supported by a team of facilitators from Ami Nagle & Associates Consulting, Inc. The team included Sarah Griffiths, Catherine Jahnes, Ami Nagle, and Sabine Schoenbach.

APPENDIX E

Child Care Availability Task Force Recommendations Categorization Table

| 1. AFFORDABILITY | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| All New York families will have equitable access to affordable high-quality child care from birth through school age regardless of income, race, ethnicity, immigration status, geographic location, or ability. To be affordable, families with gross family income equal to or less than 100% of the federal poverty level shall not pay for child care; families with gross family income between 150% of the federal poverty level and 100% of the federal poverty level shall pay no more than 7% of gross family income; and all other families shall pay no more than 10% of gross family income. | | | | | | |
| 1.1. Setting a statewide standard for affordability and enact a path to get there. | Is new funding required for implementation? | Can this be accomplished administratively? | Does this require a statutory change? | Does this maintain existing child care capacity? | Does it add new child care capacity? | Does it support high-quality infrastructure? |
| Leveraging and expanding existing successful programs. | To "expand," yes. | N/A | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Building on support provided during the pandemic. | Yes | Yes | No | N/A | N/A | Yes |
| Investing sufficient additional state/federal resources to require all counties to provide child care subsidies to families earning less than 85% of the state median income and maintain a consistent statewide co-pay limit. | Yes | Yes | No | N/A | N/A | yes |
| Providing tax credits to support child care affordability for working families who do not qualify for subsidies due to income eligibility. | Yes | No | Yes | N/A | N/A | Yes |
| 1.2. Adopting subsidy market rates that reflect the real cost of high-quality child care. | Yes | Yes | No | Yes, if funded | Yes, if funded | Yes |
| 1.3. Making phase-in decisions based on racial equity and other equity priorities. | Yes | Yes | No | N/A | Yes | N/A |
| 1.4. Maximizing available funding across all sources. | Is new funding required for implementation? | Can this be accomplished administratively? | Does this require a statutory change? | Does this maintain existing child care capacity? | Does it add new child care capacity? | Does it support high-quality infrastructure? |
| Braiding and blending funding streams. | No | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Increase awareness and use of current tax credits. | Minimal | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Developing a suite of tax credits to meet additional needs where appropriate. | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Equity Considerations: This set of recommendations promotes equity by prioritizing access to historically underserved communities by addressing the cost of care. We recommend prioritizing funding streams that serve historically underserved communities, including communities of color and low-income communities. | | | | | | |

2. EQUITABLE ACCESS

All children, from birth to school age, will be able to access high quality child care regardless of income, race, ethnicity, immigration status, geographic location, or ability. To obtain equitable access, the systemic barriers of high cost, disparate quality, and insufficient supply of provider capacity and locations must be addressed.

| 2.1. Ending disparities caused by inequitable county-by-county fragmentation. | Is new funding required for implementation? | Does this require an administrative rule change? | Does this require a statutory change? | Does this maintain existing child care capacity? | Does it add new child care capacity? | Does it support high-quality infrastructure? |
|---|---|--|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing child care subsidies for income-eligible families who are unemployed and seeking work, retraining, or pursuing higher education; families involved in domestic violence; families receiving preventive child welfare services; foster families; families experiencing homelessness; and children with special needs consistently statewide. | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes, if funded | Yes, if funded | N/A |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding subsidy eligibility to at least 85% of the state median income. | Yes | Yes | No | Yes, if funded | Yes, if funded | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing parent co-pays to no more than 10% of income over the federal poverty level to match the four counties that already establish co-pays at the 10% threshold, as an interim step towards the Task Force’s overall affordability target; | Yes | Yes | No | Yes, if funded | Yes, if funded | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building on the waivers and flexibility allowed during the pandemic, streamline eligibility processes and eliminate barriers. | No | Yes | No | N/A | N/A | Yes |
| 2.2. Increasing provider capacity in order to eliminate “child care deserts.” | Is new funding required for implementation? | Does this require an administrative rule change? | Does this require a statutory change? | Does this maintain existing child care capacity? | Does it add new child care capacity? | Does it support high-quality infrastructure? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocating capital funding through the REDCs and/or other economic development initiatives to expand the number of high-quality slots. | Yes | No | No | No | Yes | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocating operating funding to establish and maintain a specific number of child care slots, especially for infants and toddlers, in high-quality settings in these underserved areas. | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes | Yes |
| 2.3. Improving fiscal stability for child care providers to give families confidence and stability. | Is new funding required for implementation? | Does this require an administrative rule change? | Does this require a statutory change? | Does this maintain existing child care capacity? | Does it add new child care capacity? | Does it support high-quality infrastructure? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a pool of bridge operating funding grants so that existing programs remain open for business. | Yes | No | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve predictability and provider stability. | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support shared services and other efficiencies. | Yes | No | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help meet the capital needs of these small businesses. | Yes | No | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 2.4. Eliminating policies that force children out of early childhood care. | No | Yes | No | No | No | Yes |
| 2.5. Engaging employers as a key partner in establishing an affordable and accessible high-quality child care system. | Is new funding required for implementation? | Does this require an administrative rule change? | Does this require a statutory change? | Does this maintain existing child care capacity? | Does it add new child care capacity? | Does it support high-quality infrastructure? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on efforts to engage the REDCs to increase the employer voice in child care. | No | No | No | No | No | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a toolkit for employers on why and how to support child care. | No | No | No | No | No | Yes |

Equity Considerations: Recommendations focus on adding child care capacity in deserts, particularly for historically underserved children and families, including infants and toddlers and other vulnerable populations such as those who experience homelessness. By addressing disparities in county administration, the recommendations will also ensure that financial assistance for child care is equitably distributed.

3. HIGH-QUALITY

All families will be able to access high-quality child care through providers that effectively support early learning and development; employ and support a diverse, skilled, and equitably compensated early care and education workforce; and meet clear and evidence-based program quality standards that support continuous improvement and make program quality transparent to families.

| | Is new funding required for implementation? | Does this require an administrative rule change? | Does this require a statutory change? | Does this maintain existing child care capacity? | Does it add new child care capacity? | Does it support high-quality infrastructure? |
|--|---|--|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| 3.1 Supporting program quality and provide transparency to families. | Yes | No | No | NA | NA | Yes |
| 3.2 Paying the early childhood workforce fairly. | Is new funding required for implementation? | Does this require an administrative rule change? | Does this require a statutory change? | Does this maintain existing child care capacity? | Does it add new child care capacity? | Does it support high-quality infrastructure? |
| Entry-level compensation that ensures self-sufficiency. | Yes | Yes | No | NA | NA | Yes |
| Educator compensation that includes benefits and is commensurate with an individual's qualifications and experience. | Yes | Yes | No | NA | NA | Yes |
| Compensation that increases appropriately as educators accrue credentials and experience. | Yes | Yes | No | NA | NA | Yes |
| 3.3. Providing pathways for early childhood educators to advance in their careers and professional learning. | Is new funding required for implementation? | Does this require an administrative rule change? | Does this require a statutory change? | Does this maintain existing child care capacity? | Does it add new child care capacity? | Does it support high-quality infrastructure? |
| Strengthening career pathways. | Minimal | No | No | NA | NA | Yes |
| Expanding effective professional learning opportunities. | Minimal | No | No | NA | NA | Yes |
| Improving the infrastructure to provide professional development. | Minimal | Yes | No | NA | NA | Yes |

Equity Considerations: Implementation of quality enhancement should prioritize communities with low resources and provide sufficient support and resources to help programs serving historically underserved communities. Improving compensation for the child care workforce disproportionately benefits women and communities of color, and workforce system strategies need to prioritize baseline compensation enhancements and the elimination of barriers to professional learning.

4. COORDINATED

High-quality child care will be part of an integrated early care and learning system with consistent and coordinated standards, oversight, and monitoring. There will be coherent and efficient regulations, policies, and procedures that maximize resources, eliminate redundancies, and are child and family focused. There will be clear accountability and transparency based on relevant data and best practice. This integrated system will be easy for families to access and streamlined for providers and oversight entities.

| 4.1. Publicly communicate the status and impact of the child care system and New York State’s progress achieving the vision and steps proposed by the Task Force. | Is new funding required for implementation? | Does this require an administrative rule change? | Does this require a statutory change? | Does this maintain existing child care capacity? | Does it add new child care capacity? | Does it support a high-quality infrastructure? |
|--|---|--|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a dashboard with data on key child care indicators. | Yes | Yes | No | N/A | N/A | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish a biennial Return on Investment (ROI) study. | Yes | No | No | N/A | N/A | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue regular updates on implementation of the Task Force’s recommendations. | No | No | No | N/A | N/A | Yes |
| 4.2. Developing a data system to support quality, efficiency, and transparency. | Is new funding required for implementation? | Does this require an administrative rule change? | Does this require a statutory change? | Does this maintain existing child care capacity? | Does it add new child care capacity? | Does it support a high-quality infrastructure? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish accurate and consistent data. | No | No | No | N/A | N/A | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an early childhood integrated data system. | Yes | Yes | No | N/A | N/A | Yes |
| 4.3 Streamlining and coordinating across agencies to better serve families and child care providers. | Is new funding required for implementation? | Does this require an administrative rule change? | Does this require a statutory change? | Does this maintain existing child care capacity? | Does it add new child care capacity? | Does it support a high-quality infrastructure? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing and aligning regulations. | No | Yes | No | N/A | N/A | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlining monitoring. | No | Yes | No | N/A | N/A | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing a formal interagency convening of agencies that have regulatory oversight of early care and education programs. | No | Yes | No | N/A | N/A | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminating redundant background checks. | Yes | Yes | Yes | N/A | N/A | Yes |
| 4.4 Increasing pre-kindergarten collaboration with community-based organizations. | Is new funding required for implementation? | Does this require an administrative rule change? | Does this require a statutory change? | Does this maintain existing child care capacity? | Does it add new child care capacity? | Does it support a high-quality infrastructure? |
| | No | No | Yes | N/A | N/A | Yes |

Equity Considerations: This set of recommendations promotes equity by providing transparency in data so that New York State can craft policies with an equity lens and target resources and investment more effectively.

ENDNOTES

¹ Raising NY poll. <https://raisingnewyork.org/coronavirus/> (September 2020).

² <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-launch-child-care-availability-task-force>

³ <https://www.lohud.com/story/opinion/2020/07/02/whats-biggest-obstacle-our-economic-comeback-child-care/5362896002/>

⁴ New York State Department of Health COVID-19 tracker. Accessed on 12/9/2020.

⁵ <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/08/parents-juggle-work-and-child-care-during-pandemic.html>

⁶ America’s Edge; *Strengthening New York’s Businesses through Investments in Early Care and Education*; 2010. in *Early Care and Education*

⁷ Raising NY poll. <https://raisingnewyork.org/coronavirus/>

⁸ <https://childcaredeserts.org/2018/index.html?state=NY>

⁹ Raising NY poll. <https://raisingnewyork.org/coronavirus/>

¹⁰ America’s Edge; *Strengthening New York’s Businesses through Investments in Early Care and Education*; 2010.

¹¹ US Department of Education; *Expanding Access to High-Quality Learning*; August 2016;

¹² Economic Policy Institute. <https://www.epi.org/publication/its-time-for-an-ambitious-national-investment-in-americas-children/>

¹³ Economic Policy Institute. <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/NY>

¹⁴ “New York Cost of Quality Study” conducted by the Center for American Progress on behalf of Raising NY.

¹⁵ For reference, the following table shows the relationship between 85% of state median income and the federal poverty limit based on family size:

| Family size | 85% of State Median Income | 85% of State Median Income to FPL | 100% of FPL | 200% of FPL | 300% of FPL |
|-------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 2 | \$55,453 | 322% | \$17,240 | \$34,480 | \$51,720 |
| 3 | \$68,501 | 315% | \$21,720 | \$43,440 | \$65,160 |
| 4 | \$81,549 | 311% | \$26,200 | \$52,400 | \$78,600 |
| 5 | \$94,597 | 308% | \$30,680 | \$61,360 | \$92,040 |
| 6 | \$107,645 | 306% | \$35,106 | \$70,320 | \$105,480 |

¹⁶ “New York Cost of Quality Study” conducted by the Center for American Progress on behalf of Raising NY.

¹⁷ Center for American Progress. https://cdn.americanprogress.org/content/uploads/2019/09/12071602/New-York.pdf?_ga=2.179616100.1116597278.1603123902-1689147858.1601847434

¹⁸ For additional information, see: “Expulsion and Suspension Toolkit,” Early Care and Learning Council, available at <https://earlycareandlearning.org/nys-elan-nbcdi-html/>.

¹⁹ Alliance for Early Success. <https://earllysuccess.org/ChildCareRoadmap>

²⁰ NWLC; *Undervalued: A Brief History of Women’s Care Work and Child Care Policy in the United States*; 2017

²¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/07/11/the-people-taking-care-of-our-kids-live-in-poverty/>

²² United Way of New York State ALICE — Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed; <https://uwnys.org/alice/>

²³ Child Trends. 2018 Early Childhood Data Systems Survey. <https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/ECDC-50-state-survey-9.25.pdf>

²⁴ Raising New York. “Poll: Voters say strengthening early childhood is among top issues for NY to address, want state to do more to support infants and toddlers.” August 8, 2019. https://raisingnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/08/Raising-NY-Launch_Poll-Memo.pdf

²⁵ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2378023119860277>

²⁶ Malik, Rasheed. Center for American Progress. “The Effects of Universal Preschool in Washington, D.C.” September 26, 2018. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/09/26/458208/effects-universal-preschool-washington-d-c/>

²⁷ <https://www.strongnation.org/articles/580-child-care-is-essential-to-enhance-productivity-today-and-tomorrow>

²⁸ <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2018/12/affordable-daycare-subsidized-child-care-working-mom-quebec/579193/>

²⁹ <https://www.epi.org/publication/its-time-for-an-ambitious-national-investment-in-americas-children/>; These estimates use each state’s median income for

families with children and use Blau's (2001) finding that decreasing child care costs by 1 percent increases mothers' labor force participation by 0.2 percent.

³⁰ <https://www.epi.org/publication/its-time-for-an-ambitious-national-investment-in-americas-children/>

³¹ Vandell, D. L., Belsky, J., Burchinal, M., et al. (2010). Do effects of early child care extend to age 15 years? Results from the NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development. *Child Development*, 81, 737-756.

³² <https://srcd.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/cdev.12645>

³³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; <https://nwlc.org/resources/four-times-more-women-than-men-dropped-out-of-the-labor-force-in-september/>; September 2020

³⁴ Mildred E. Warner, "Recession, Stimulus and the Child Care Sector: Understanding Economic Dynamics, Calculating Impact" 4 Linking Economic Development and Child Care Research Project, Cornell University, 2009, p.4; <http://government.cce.cornell.edu/mirror/documents/publications/163.pdf>

https://www.peri.umass.edu/fileadmin/pdf/published_study/ECE_MacEwan_PERI_Jan8.pdf

³⁵ Child Care Aware "U.S. and the High Cost of Child Care." 2018. <https://info.childcareaware.org/hubfs/appendices%2010.19.18.pdf>

State University of New York. "Fast Facts." January, 2019. <https://www.suny.edu/about/fast-facts/>

City University of New York. "Tuition and Fees." Fall 2019. <https://www.cuny.edu/financial-aid/tuition-and-college-costs/tuition-fees/#undergraduate-tuition>

³⁶ Child Care Aware® of America is a national organization that works with more than 400 state and local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies nationwide to advocate for child care policies that positively impact the lives of children and families.

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³⁸ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2016-09-30/pdf/2016-22986.pdf>

³⁹ <https://raisingnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/12/NY-Cost-of-Quality-Report-Raising-NY.pdf>

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/07/11/the-people-taking-care-of-our-kids-live-in-poverty/>

⁴² "New York Cost of Quality Study" conducted by the Center for American Progress on behalf of Raising NY.

⁴³ Research For Action, *Making it Work: Examining the Status of Non-Traditional Child Care in Pennsylvania*; June 2019.

⁴⁴ Center for Human Services Research, University at Albany, 2019. *NYS Birth through Five Preschool Development Grant Needs Assessment Report*, NYS Council on Children and Families.

⁴⁵ <https://childcaredeserts.org/2018/index.html?state=NY>

⁴⁶ https://raisingnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/12/Child-care-Crisis_PRESS-RELEASE_12.19.pdf

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ <https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/economic-impact-of-child-care/>

⁴⁹ https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/effects_of_coronavirus_on_child_care.final.pdf

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⁵¹ *America's Edge; Strengthening New York's Businesses through Investments in Early Care and Education*; 2010.

