**New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council**

**Recommendations to Governor Hochul**

**September 2022**

**ECAC Vision:** All young children in New York are healthy, learning and thriving in families that are supported by a full complement of services and resources essential for successful development.

**Equity Statement:** The Early Childhood Advisory Council holds a deep commitment to social justice and racial equity, as a process and a goal, as evidenced by our work across the state. We recognize that, in order to uphold our vision and mission to support young children’s development, we must actively, critically and continuously work to disrupt and dismantle systemic inequities due to race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, legal status and family structure. It is our responsibility to address the inequities impacting the lives of children and families on individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels. In doing so we build systems that provide all young children and their families with equitable access to the services, resources and experiences that they deserve in order to thrive.

Two key ECAC recommendations are below. Both build on existing efforts and initiatives underway to support maternal and early childhood well-being in New York State, such as the Department of Health’s First 1,000 Days on Medicaid Initiative and Prevention Agenda, the Office of Children and Family Services’ Child Care and Development Fund Plan, the Office of Mental Health’s Healthy Steps Initiative, and the recommendations of the Child Care Availability Task Force.

**Recommendation #1: Increase developmental screenings to promote healthy children and families.**

New York State ranks second to last in the percent of children receiving developmental screenings (JAMA Pediatrics, 2018), with only 17.5% of children having a formal developmental screening before entering school. About 1.1 million of our state’s 1.4 million children are never screened for disabilities or developmental delays in their critical first years of life, when there is the best chance for successful intervention. With as many as 1 in 4 children at risk for delay (Birth to Five; Watch Me Thrive, 2014), universal early childhood screening is critical to identify delays and intervene at the opportune period of child development. At this rate – and without increased screening – up to 9,520 preschool and kindergarten classrooms in New York State will continue to be filled each year by children with unidentified challenges.[[1]](#footnote-2)

**The ECAC proposes that all children birth through five and their families receive comprehensive and culturally responsive developmental screenings and timely connections to needed resources and services.** A three-year, cross-sector (health care, child care, human services) plan will be developed to better identify and respond to developmental concerns and delays, thereby improving developmental and social-emotional outcomes in early childhood and address social drivers of health including family functioning, food security, and systemic factors such as poverty. This plan will leverage existing state efforts, engage community-based organizations, emphasize family empowerment, and track success with robust data collection ($2.5M for first phase of expansion).

**Recommendation #2: Address the needs of the early childhood workforce.**

Child care programs in New York State, as in the rest of the country, faced unprecedented losses in enrollment in recent years. A 2022 report by the Children’s Agenda found that 3,524 child care providers across New York State closed during the COVID-19 public health crisis, resulting in 10,554 fewer children being able to be served than before the pandemic. [[2]](#footnote-3) The pandemic exacerbated existing challenges regarding access to child care, resulting in parents leaving the workforce to care for their children due to a lack of access to care. Notably, ninety-one percent of child care directors are female, and 60% are people of color[[3]](#footnote-4). In other words, in addition to harming businesses and workers generally, this is an issue of racial equity.

**The ECAC proposes to support, expand, and sustain an aligned early childhood workforce, including home-based and center-based child care providers, Head Start, early intervention, preschool special education, and prekindergarten by ensuring equitable compensation and responsive professional development. ECAC has identified this as the top race equity issue in New York.**

Solutions to accomplish this proposal are as follows:

* + - * + Transitioning the Child Care Stabilization grants to a wage supplement program that uses the ECAC salary scale to achieve pay parity for child care providers with school district prekindergarten teachers (e.g., consider a three-year plan to increase compensation over time, see salary scale attached).
				+ Growing the early intervention workforce by ensuring adequate compensation, increasing reimbursement rates, and implementing workforce supports. The ECAC supports the Early Intervention Coordinating Council recommendation of a 11 percent across the board rate increase for all early intervention services, with an estimated full annual state impact of $28.1M ($19.8M General Fund and $8.3M State Share Medicaid). Collectively, counties across the state will also see an estimated impact of $28.8 M.
				+ Increasing early childhood scholarships (the New York State Early Childhood Workforce Scholarship and the SUNY/CUNY Birth to Five Workforce Scholarship) for degrees, certificates, and credentials to provide career pathways for early childhood educators ($3.5M).
				+ Investing in the Early Childhood Career Centers in the 10 economic development regions of the state to support and expand innovative, equity-focused recruitment and retention ($3M). These Centers were piloted using federal PDGB5 funding in 2020-2022 and were extremely successful (despite the pandemic), providing over 6,000 people with career development services including scholarship supports over the last two years.

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Implementing these recommendations would fundamentally and effectively change the trajectory of early childhood systems in New York State and improve outcomes for young children and their families.



**Patricia E. Persell**

ECAC Co-Chair

**NYS Council on Children and Families**

1. <https://helpmegrowny.org/health-care-providers/developmental-screening-and-follow-up/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://thechildrensagenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Child-Care-Closures-Report-FINAL.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <https://raisingnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/03/State-of-the-Childcare-Report_F_3.17.2021.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)