



ALL OUR KIN INC

NEWYORK@ALLOURKIN.ORG 917-933-3282 WWW.ALLOURKIN.ORG

**Testimony Submitted by Steven Morales, NY Policy Director of All Our Kin
FY25 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Human Services
New York State Legislature
January 31, 2024**

Honorable Senators and Members of the Assembly,

My name is Steven Morales and I'm the New York Policy Director at [All Our Kin](https://www.allourkin.org). All Our Kin is a nonprofit organization that trains, supports, and sustains home-based family child care educators in New York City where we work with nearly 300 family child care educators with the capacity to care for over 4,000 children citywide. We are also proud members of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care.

I want to start by sharing a bit about why family child care – paid child care that takes place in the home of a licensed professional educator – is an essential piece of New York's early care and education system. Family child care is one of the most common child care arrangements in New York. There are roughly 10,500 family child care programs across the state, with the capacity to care for over 140,000 children. Thirty-nine percent of all children in publicly funded care in New York are in family child care programs.

Family child care programs not only offer families stability, but they offer children opportunity – opportunity to explore, to build strong relationships, and to develop skills that will remain with them for the rest of their lives. I encourage each of you to think for a moment about your early childhood – think about a caregiver who you knew you could trust. I hope that we all have memories of an educator in our lives who helped us grow into the people we are today. That is what child care offers and that is what this essential workforce means to our children.

And the reality is, that this workforce has continued to do the Herculean task of nurturing and educating our children at all hours of the day while making immense personal sacrifices. For example, according to a New School study, family child care educators in New York City earn \$10.61 per hour – far less than minimum wage – for the invaluable work they do. Educators are taking money out of their own pockets to make up for our state's broken child care system. And I worry that because many educators have managed to hold on by the skin of their teeth and their commitment to our children, we take their sacrifice for granted.

If the pandemic taught us anything, it taught us that child care is essential for working families and our economy. We know the economic benefits of child care and that a lack of child care adds up to billions of dollars of economic losses for our state. Over these last few years, the Legislature and Governor have stepped up to expand child care subsidy eligibility, lower payments for families, and offer temporary grants to child care programs. But unfortunately, as



ALL OUR KIN INC

NEWYORK@ALLOURKIN.ORG 917-933-3282 WWW.ALLOURKIN.ORG

pandemic emergency funds are set to expire, the Executive Budget offers no new investments in the child care workforce – which puts all of the progress we have made at risk. We need our state government to continue to step up for children, families, and educators in this budget.

All Our Kin envisions a New York where all families have access to high-quality child care in the setting of their choice and where all educators are well-compensated and supported for the essential work that they do. To make this a reality:

- **We call for an investment of \$1.2 billion in a permanent state child care workers fund.** This fund would be used to supplement the wages of child care educators across the state so that they earn enough to support themselves and their families. This is the most crucial investment we can make to ensure that this essential workforce can continue to serve our communities. Without it, educators will continue to be forced to leave the field for more reliable jobs in retail and food service and families will lose access to the care they need.
- **We also call on the State to fund the bi-partisan child care decoupling legislation** that was overwhelmingly passed, and eventually vetoed, in last year's session. I think we can all agree that making sure families can access care when they need it is a common-sense reform for our modern economy.
- Finally, we are encouraged by the Governor's **proposal for pilot Family Child Care Networks**. When funded and implemented well, staffed Family Child Care Networks are the gold standard for supporting educators and the children and communities they serve. Through our own work, we know that networks can provide stability and community in a field that is much needed.

In conclusion, we all know the importance of child care for our society. I am sure that you have all heard stories from your constituents about how hard it is for families to find child care and for providers to run sustainable child care businesses. It is time to permanently invest in the child care workforce to give families and educators the confidence that they can thrive in the State of New York for the long term.

Thank you.