



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Pre-Natal to Pre-K: Supporting New York's Families

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| ISSUE: **CHILDCARE ADVANCE, DEMOCRATIC POLICY GROUP, AFFORDABILITY, CHILDREN & FAMILIES, EARLY CHILDHOOD**

# Pre-Natal to Pre-K: Supporting New York's Young Families

Senate Democrats Push for Stronger Paid Family Leave and Unveil Initiatives to Help Families During Critical Early Childhood Period  
**Proposals Draw Praise and Support from Advocate Organizations**

*Plan Would Save NY Taxpayers \$2 Billion Annually*

(Albany, NY) The Senate Democratic Conference today unveiled a set of policy initiatives spearheaded by the Senate Democratic Policy Group to help New York families during the

critical early childhood period. These initiatives include a strong paid family leave program, increased access to childcare, assistance for New York's working parents and caregivers, and support for the growth and development of all New York children. Multiple organizations that provide support and advocacy for new parents, young children and working class New Yorkers have already offered praise and support for the Senate Democratic proposals. When enacted, these initiatives would result in over \$2 billion annually in savings and financial returns for New York State as well as additional economic activity.

The Senate Democratic plan focuses on the critical early years of a child's life – from the prenatal period until the beginning of pre-kindergarten. Ideas advanced by the Senate Democrats in a report released today by the Senate Democratic Policy Group include a robust paid family leave program that will provide employees with two-thirds of their salaries during the time they care for infants and loved ones in need. Additionally, the "Childcare Advance" program would allow families to defer up to \$2,000 of their state taxes each year while young children are in childcare. The Senate Democrats are also calling for additional subsidies to help pay for childcare for working families. Another Senate Democratic policy initiative would increase treatment resources to expand support for women facing maternal depression.

"Investing in our state's children is not only the right thing to do, it makes smart economic sense as well," **Senate Democratic Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins** said. "State government has a responsibility to provide New York families with more support services and assistance during the critical early childhood years. The Senate Democrats will continue to fight to improve the lives of all New Yorkers and it is my hope that the Senate Republican Majority

will join us to pass these common sense initiatives.”

**Senate Democratic Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris** said, “Families across New York continue to struggle during the most vulnerable time in a child’s life. Through family-friendly workplace policies, child care subsidies, providing parents with tax relief and creating an Office of Early Childcare Services we can build a more affordable and stronger New York. Now is the time for the Senate Republicans to stop playing politics and join with us to help improve the lives of millions of New York families.”

**Bill Sponsor and Democratic Policy Group Chair, Senator Daniel Squadron** said, “The first few years are some of the toughest for parents and most important for kids. New York can do more to provide support and services in these early years to help New York families, and also create real savings for the state. The Policy Group has identified key ideas to expand maternal home visiting, support children and families, and establish family friendly workplace policies, as well as my Childcare Advance proposal, which helps more families afford childcare. Thank you to Leader Stewart-Cousins, Policy Group members Senators Latimer, Montgomery, and Serrano, and the Democratic Conference for their work on these ideas.”

**Bill Sponsor, Senator Addabbo** said, “No New Yorker should be forced to choose between caring for a newborn or sick relative and potentially losing their jobs and being able to support themselves. Enacting paid family leave would ensure that our state’s residents no longer have to make this difficult choice. This common sense legislation is good for our

state's employers and employees and it is the right thing to do. I urge the Senate Republicans to join us and working families across the state to pass Paid Family Leave."

**Bill Sponsor, Senator Brad Hoylman** said, "Many working families are forced to navigate multiple jobs and conflicting schedules to ensure their children get the care they need. Too often this responsibility is made impossible by employer-mandated "call-in shifts" that require workers to find out at the last minute whether they have to report to work on a given day. Such policies exploit workers, disrupt families, and rob parents of their full earning potential. That is why the Senate Democratic Conference is including initiatives -- led by Conference Leader Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins and sponsored by Senator Joseph Addabbo -- to limit these unfair workplace practices and provide paid family leave and childcare subsidies to New York's working families."

**Bill Sponsor and Democratic Policy Group Member, Senator Velmanette Montgomery**, said, "The first few years of a child's life are critical to development and future potential. Unfortunately, parents receive the least support during those same years for childcare, education, health of mother and child and are often forced to sacrifice or delay their careers for the well-being of their children. This puts additional financial strain on families that reverberate through New York's economy for a generation. Providing more help for families of young children is not only the right thing to do for New York's childhood development, but the right thing to do for New York's economic development."

**Bill Sponsor, Senator Kevin Parker** said, “Proper early childhood development and education are critical to public health and a bright economic future for New York State. The developmental progress made in the first five years of a child’s life lay the foundation for the trajectory of the next sixty, but state government does not adequately provide for the comprehensive services and resources that would ensure opportunities for every child of New York to thrive. Included among the initiatives described in ‘Prenatal to Pre-K: Supporting New York’s Families’ is a provision to establish a New York State Office of Early Childhood to maximize benefits for families with young children and oversee early childhood programs and funding streams.”

**Bill Sponsor, Senator Jose Peralta** said, “Unpredictable work schedules and a lack of paid family leave disadvantages employees who must often juggle their work lives, along with their responsibilities to their children and families. Providing employees with adequate notice of their work schedules, as well as notice of the minimum hours they can expect to work each month will not only help hard-working families meet their needs, but also help employers retain their most productive staff members. When low-wage employees earn less than anticipated, it hampers their ability to properly provide for their families. Successfully raising and caring for family members is difficult enough in New York in light of the State’s cost of living, and we will continue to remove roadblocks to this success wherever and whenever possible.”

**Bill Sponsor, Senator Roxanne Persaud** said, “The child bearing process can be a very stressful time for women. The stigma associated with the term depression often discourages mothers and pregnant women from talking about their feelings and symptoms of depression. It is

time to require physicians and other healthcare professionals to screen for pregnancy related mental illnesses to help new mothers better care for themselves and their families. This is a common sense way to ensure families receive the mental health services they may require and help remove any lingering stigmas for these new mothers.”

These policy initiatives are discussed in a report by the Senate Democratic Policy Group released today: “Pre-Natal to Pre-K: Supporting New York’s Young Families.” Policy initiatives outlined in the Senate Democratic Policy Group’s report include:

**Establish Family Friendly Workplace Practices.**

- Implement a 12-week paid family leave program utilizing the existing Temporary Disability Insurance system for implementation, as three other states have already done.
- Support employee requests for flexible schedules and protect employees from retaliation for making such requests.
- Enhance protection for employees for split or cancelled shifts.
- Improve notice provided to employees for schedules and schedule changes.

**Eric Williams, Campaign Director for the Paid Family Leave Campaign**, said, “The New York State Senate Democratic Conference’s white paper is clear: to build strong, family friendly workplaces, New York needs paid family leave. A strong paid family leave program will mean that families are no longer forced to choose between caring for their loved ones and their financial security. Paid family leave must ensure 12 weeks of job-protected leave for all

private sector workers, at 2/3rds of their weekly wage and increase the rate of Temporary Disability Insurance so that the program works for all New Yorkers. We commend the Senate Democratic Conference for continuing to prioritize the passage of paid family leave in 2016.”

**Stuart Appelbaum, President of the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union, UFCW**, said, “New Yorkers understand that workers shouldn’t be forced to choose between their jobs and taking care of their loved ones when there is a health issue. Paid family leave would provide New York workers with peace of mind, and prevent the financial nightmare of losing income when there is a medical situation in their family.”

**Sherry Leiwant, Co-President and Co-Founder, A Better Balance**, said, “As an organization working for policies to enable women – and men -- to care for their families without risking their economic security we have been appalled at the growing problem of unstable work schedules in many industries as well as workers’ fear of retaliation for even requesting a schedule that will suit their family needs. When a worker has no advance notice of his or her schedule, arranging child care or family time becomes impossible. Enacting policies that will require some advance notice of schedules and will prohibit retaliation for asking for a schedule change would be a great step forward for New York’s families. We applaud publication of this white paper calling for policies to address abusive scheduling practices that hurt New York families.”

## **Increase Access to Childcare Through the “Childcare Advance” and Childcare Subsidies.**

- Average annual childcare costs in New York State are \$10,140 to \$14,144 per year for an infant and \$9,776 to \$11,700 for a four-year-old.
- Establish the “Childcare Advance,” a deferral of state taxes to help 134,000 families afford the cost of early childcare and generate over \$80 million in savings and financial returns to the state per year plus economic activity.
- Increase support for childcare subsidies with \$190 million of increased funding to expand the number of eligible families receiving subsidies.

**Susan Antos, Senior Staff Attorney at the Empire Justice Center**, said, “The Empire Justice Center is thrilled that the Senate Democratic conference has prioritized investing in paid family, leave home visiting, and investing in child care subsidies. Investment in child care subsidies is important because it will cost New York State \$190 million to is comply with the new eligibility and health and safety requirements of reauthorized federal child care block grant. We look forward to working with conference leader Stewart-Cousins, the Democratic conference in the legislature as a whole to advance these initiatives which are so important to supporting New York’s working families.”

## **Treat Maternal Depression**

- Make available a central, accessible list of providers offering treatment for maternal depression.



- Invest in treatment resources, including referral networks, peer support, and a strengthened and expanded hotline.
- Develop – in coordination with experts – a state best practice protocol for the treatment of maternal depression, including consideration of telemedicine to make treatment options more widely available.

**Leah Kaufman, MD, FACOG, Vice Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology at SUNY Upstate University Hospital**, said, “ACOG District II is committed to working with state policy makers to emphasize the importance of treatment for maternal depression. Depression in the prenatal period can have detrimental effects on women and their families, and timely identification of at-risk women coupled with accessible and quality treatment options are vital to improving clinical outcomes. We are dedicated to collaborating with the state to ensure that comprehensive treatment and referral processes are put in place to support women and families suffering from maternal depression.”

**Sonia Murdock, Executive Director and Co-Founder of the Postpartum Resource Center of New York**, said, “This legislation is an important investment by New York State to save lives by combating the number one medical complication related to childbearing - maternal depression - and related perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. We fully support these legislative efforts that address this major public health concern that will increase moms, dads, and families getting the critical help and support they need for the prevention and treatment of maternal depression. All New York State babies and families deserve being made a priority and having our support right from the start.”

## **Offer Evidence-Based Maternal Home Visiting Universally to Eligible Families**

- Provide universal access for eligible families to evidence-based maternal home visiting programs to serve an additional 27,000 families and generate over \$678 million in long-term savings

**Winning Beginning NY Coalition**, said, “With New York State's emphasis on poverty, we are pleased to see a plan that employs two strategies-- home visiting and child care-- as strategies to combat this plight by strengthening both families and the workforce. We look forward to continuing to work with the Legislature to prioritize early learning.”

## **Create a New York State Office of Early Childhood**

- Create an Office of Early Childhood to ensure the state is using all available early childhood resources to maximize benefits for young children and families.
- The new office would ensure coordination of early childhood programs including oversight of programs and funding streams

**Kate Breslin, President and CEO of the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy**, says, “The Senate Democratic Policy Group’s recommendations are right on target and aligned with those of economists and medical professionals alike – invest early in children and their

families for the best return on investment. An opportunity gap can begin to develop at or even before birth and can be especially acute for the nearly one in four (24.4%) New York State children under age five who live in poverty. Since seventy-five percent of brain growth and 85% of intellect, personality and social skills develop before age five, it is imperative that we invest in our youngest children and their families – with affordable and high quality child care; workplace policies that support caregiving; screening and treatment for maternal depression; and maternal, infant and early childhood home visiting -- long before children enter school.”

Recent studies have demonstrated both the enormous impact of the prenatal and early childhood period on a child’s development as well as the substantial benefits of state investment in these critical early years. Unfortunately, families across New York State continue to struggle to make ends meet and are often unable to provide vital developmental support to their children as a result. That is why the Senate Democrats have sponsored legislation to address the findings of the white paper and help New York children receive the support and services they deserve.

**Senator George Latimer, Democratic Policy Group Member**, said, “Too many hardworking New York families are being crushed by the financial burden of child care and go without the post-natal follow-up care that can improve outcomes for mother and child. By increasing the affordability of child care state government can help parents succeed and prevent serious and costly health and developmental concerns. We cannot afford to pass up opportunities to help families raise healthy, productive New Yorkers.”

**Democratic Policy Group Member, Senator Jose Serrano**, said, “When New Yorkers grow up healthy, productive and successful, New York thrives. That is why the Senate Democratic Policy Group has put forth initiatives that would improve health and child care and reduce the financial burden a family faces during the first few critical years of their child’s life. Analysis of these initiatives shows a significant return on investment and yearly savings and financial benefits for New York State. Bottom line, implementing these initiatives is the right thing to do for the state and for New York’s families.”

**Senator Neil Breslin** said, “Providing young families and new parents with extra support during their children's formative years should be a top priority for state government. We have an obligation to address the concerns raised by these New Yorkers and the advocate organizations who fight to protect their interests. That is exactly what my colleagues and I in the Senate Democratic Conference have done and I hope the Senate Republicans will work with us to pass these bills into law.”

**Senator Martin Malavé Dilan** said, “The proposals we put forth today give New York families the ability to grow and thrive. It’s a comprehensive package of support services and progressive policies that seeks to nurture the family through generation to generation.”

**Senator Jesse Hamilton** said, “‘Pre-Natal to Pre-K’ presents an acutely necessary package of measures, steps designed to support New York’s families through a crucial stage that has

repercussions for decades to come. From supporting maternal health and affordable childcare, to establishing 12-week family leave across workplaces, households will have an easier time getting the work-life balance right due to these actions. As Ranking Member of the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Committee, I emphasize the need for the additional investments in combating maternal depression contained in 'Pre-Natal to Pre-K.' Mental health problems are public health problems in need of just as much attention, awareness, and action as other major public health challenges. New York will be a healthier, more family friendly state once we have adopted these important measures. I am proud to stand with my colleagues in advocating for giving every family in New York critical tools to meet the challenges they face.”

**Senator Tim Kennedy** said, “As a legislator and as a father of three young children, I’m proud to stand with the Senate Democratic Conference to unveil these policy initiatives aimed at helping New York State’s families at a time when they need it most. Not only will these proposals increase opportunities, access and vital support for working parents, but they will generate millions in annual savings.”

**Senator Liz Krueger** said, “Looking after the health and development of our youngest citizens is not just a moral imperative, it’s smart policy. Investment in early childhood leads to better futures and lower long term health and social costs, as well as fuller and more productive lives for our children and families. It’s a clear win for all New Yorkers, and deserves bipartisan support.”

**Senator Marc Panepinto** said, “From prenatal to pre-k, the fundamental focus of these common sense initiatives are meant to offer vital support to New York State’s youngest residents and their families in their most formative years. To deny them of these basic rights would be criminal. The time for talk and political posturing is over. From Paid Family Leave to early childhood support, it is time the Senate Republican Majority work with the Senate Democrats and take realistic steps to provide the support all residents deserve.”

**Senator James Sanders Jr.** said, “With thousands of working-class families and single parents residing in my district, I know firsthand how important it is to ensure that these residents have paid family leave and increased access to childcare. All of the initiatives being put forth today have the potential to make a significant, positive difference for caregivers, allowing them to access resources that will enrich the quality and amount of time they can spend with their children. Creating a nurturing environment, particularly during the critical early years of a child’s life, can make all the difference as they grow and develop.”

For a full copy of the Senate Democratic Conference Policy Group’s white paper, *Pre-Natal to Pre-K: Supporting New York’s Young Families*, please visit:

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/298706186/White-Paper-Pre-Natal-to-Pre-K-Supporting-New-York-s-Young-Families>

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February 09, 2016

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