



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jessica Ramos

## Senator Ramos and Assembly Member Clark Introduce Bill to Bring Universal Child Care to New York State

JESSICA RAMOS December 21, 2021

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SENATOR JESSICA RAMOS AND ASSEMBLYMEMBER SARAH CLARK INTRODUCE BILL TO BRING UNIVERSAL CHILD CARE TO NEW YORK STATE

The Early Learning Child Care Act Scales up Ramos' 2019 bill, NYC Under 3, and focuses on eliminating the parent income cliff, work requirements, and granting providers a living wage

QUEENS, NY— State Senator Jessica Ramos (D,WF-SD13) and Assembly Member Sarah Clark (D-AD136) introduced the Early Learning Child Care Act (S7615 - Assembly number pending) on Friday, bringing their respective experience working on Universal Child Care from the municipal and federal level to overhaul New York State's child care system.

“It’s been a long journey to scale up this bill, which I first introduced in 2019 as an effort to expand the work I did on Universal Pre-K at New York City Hall. This is deeply personal to me. I remember having to be home by the time my little sister’s school bus arrived because my parents couldn’t afford child care and I couldn’t participate in extracurricular activities after school. By the time I became a mom some 15 years later, I was shocked to find out child care for my firstborn would have cost the equivalent of a second rent. The pandemic has only made a dire situation worse for families across our state and is the real key to a fair and inclusive economic recovery,” said State Senator Jessica Ramos.

“What is abundantly clear is that the commodity model for child care does not work - not for families, not for workers, and particularly not for children. My bill with Assemblymember Clark treats child care as the public utility it truly is. Particularly as we see Build Back Better falter, Albany must take decisive action to build a secure child care system that is not vulnerable to national politics. By providing our children with high-quality, free, or subsidized child care, we are investing in our state’s future. There’s no such thing as someone else’s child. We are the village.”

Assemblymember Sarah Clark said, “Our child care ecosystem has been in critical condition for years, and the last 18 months of the pandemic have only exacerbated this crisis. Countless women and men have left the workforce due to unmet childcare needs, our providers are struggling to stay afloat or attract and retain the needed staff to provide care. I am proud to join fellow working mom and legislator Senator Ramos in introducing new legislation that will transform our current child care model to achieve true universal child care for all.

Throughout the past few weeks, months, and years, we have heard directly from families, child care workers, advocates, and providers throughout the state about the issues and have addressed these challenges in new, comprehensive legislation. We must pay a living wage,

increase training, and allow for professional development. We must support our providers by paying the true cost of care. And quality child care must be affordable for every New York family, regardless of zip code. This is a math equation that has not worked for too long and it's time for a change. Child care is infrastructure, and there has never been a better time than right now to make a bold investment that will benefit New Yorkers for years to come.”

The Early Learning Child Care Act proposes a dedicated funding stream, implementing a 1% payroll tax on the top 5% highest-earning businesses in New York State, to expand access to fully-subsidized child care for families earning up to 400% of the federal poverty line (a household of 4 earning \$106,000) and provides a sliding scale subsidy capped at 7% of a family's income for families of 4 earning as much as \$265,000 per year.

Highlights from the Early Learning Child Care Act:

- Reaches 93% of New Yorkers with subsidized child care for 0 to 3-year-olds, for 3 and 4-year-olds who are missed by the Pre-K system, and subsidized after-school care for 3 and 4-year-olds with a new, dedicated funding stream
- Creates an earning floor of \$45,000 a year for child care providers, while also taking into account geographic cost-of-living and increases for specialized higher education
- Funds professional development and student loan forgiveness for child care providers
- Creates a task force to study after school for 5 to 12-year-olds and a path for 24-hour crisis child care

“A meaningful expansion of access to childcare is a vital economic need for working families around the state. The Fiscal Policy Institute supports the Early Learning Child Care Act by Senator Ramos and Assemblywoman Clark; it will enhance New York's competitive potential for a sustainable and equitable economic recovery by addressing the key interests of both families and workers,” said Jonas Shaende, Chief Economist, Fiscal Policy Institute.

"Quality, affordable child care is both a moral imperative and an economic necessity," said Pete Nabozny, Policy Director at The Children's Agenda. "Every child, no matter their circumstance, deserves a nurturing early care and education experience that prepares them for lifelong learning and success. Every professional who cares for our children deserves a sustaining wage. New York has the resources and capacity to make affordable, quality care accessible to all families with young children in our state. All we need is the will to do so. We can succeed with bold approaches like Assemblymember Clark's and Senator Ramos' plan for child care."

"Access to child care is a critical and a necessary component of New York's economic well-being. Yet, for many families, access to high-quality, affordable care is out of reach because costs are prohibitive, and supply is limited. On average, a family spends more than \$13,000 a year for child care for an infant and the supply of quality care only got tighter during the pandemic as many child care providers cut hours or closed, forcing many caregivers to leave the workforce altogether," said Richard R. Buery, Jr. CEO of Robin Hood Foundation, New York City's largest poverty-fighting philanthropic organization, and former NYC Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives and architect of New York City's Pre-K for All. "We cannot secure a successful recovery without giving caregivers the support they need to access quality affordable child care. They need help paying for this service and our communities need help to increase the supply of services available. A 2020 Business Leader Survey found half of all New York business leaders identified their workers' inability to access child care as an impediment to their business operations and productivity. The future economic success of New York depends upon affordable, accessible child care. We commend State Senator Ramos and Assemblywoman Sarah Clark for standing up for the needs of caregivers."

“Infants and young children need strong, supportive, and culturally responsive relationships with their adult caregivers - including early care and education providers - to set the foundation for healthy social-emotional development and lifelong well-being. Senator Ramos and Assemblywoman Clark understand how important this is and support professional development and increased compensation for providers with training in infant and early childhood mental health. This is critical to equip caregivers to support children's social-emotional health within the context of their culture, community, and care-giving relationships,” said Stephanie David, JD, MPH, IMH-E, Children’s Health Policy Associate, Common Ground Health (Rochester, NY), Board Member, New York State Association for Infant Mental Health (NYS-AIMH)

“Fair access to child care has always been a top priority for the RWDSU. Without access to quality child care many RWDSU members simply wouldn’t be able to balance their work, education and family needs. Families rely on these services; and these services must be accessible to all. That means we need to overhaul how New York provides child care services. The RWDSU supports Senator Ramos’ and Assemblywoman Clark’s universal child care bill which provides a solution to this important issue and puts the needs of workers and families at the forefront of New York’s economic agenda,” said Stuart Appelbaum, RWDSU President.

“There is no reason working families should have to worry about affording quality child care for their children. We are at a critical point in the pandemic recovery process and ensuring universal child care for families across the state will help people get back to work while simultaneously creating an economy that supports working people. We have seen too many Local 338 members pass on promotions and career opportunities because they can’t find quality child care or are worried about going over the benefits cliff and losing their childcare subsidies. I am proud to have partners like Senator Jessica Ramos and Assembly Member Sarah Clark in state government—our families will have a chance to thrive thanks to this

legislation,” said John R. Durso, President of Local 338 RWDSU/UFCW.

“The American child care system is an interwoven crisis for parents, child care providers, and our children. For millions of families, child care is unaffordable and inaccessible and our childcare providers lack the comprehensive and structural support they need to do this important, fundamental work,” said Vote Mama Foundation Founder & CEO, Liuba Grechen Shirley. “Vote Mama Foundation is honored to stand with champions for universal child care at the State level, Senator Jessica Ramos and Assembly Member Sarah Clark, who are fighting for quality, affordable childcare for all families. It’s time to fund childcare as a public good.”

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**2021-S7615**

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