



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Testimony for the Joint Legislative Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget Proposal: Human Services

Re: Child Care Proposals

February 12, 2025

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Advocates for Children of New York (AFC) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony regarding Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget: Human Services. For more than 50 years, AFC has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. Every year, we help thousands of New Yorkers navigate the early childhood education and school-aged education systems. We focus on students whose needs are often overlooked, such as students with disabilities, English Language Learners, students who are homeless or in foster care, students with mental health needs, and students with involvement in the juvenile or criminal legal systems.

Many low-income families rely on child care subsidies to access early childhood education programs, and we appreciate the State's increased support for child care in recent years. However, we now urge the State to increase funding to ensure that thousands of low-income children do not lose access to child care assistance over the next year.

We are pleased that, with the support of New York State, New York City and other counties have been able to expand the number of children receiving low-income child care vouchers in recent years. In fact, between June 2022 and January 2025, the number of New York City children using a low-income child care voucher increased from 7,400 to 57,700. Now, we are deeply concerned that, under the Executive Budget proposal, the City would face a substantial funding shortfall for child care. The much-needed increase in market rates implemented in October 2024 will result in New York City and other counties needing more funding to serve the same number of children, but such increased funding was not included in the Executive Budget. Furthermore, New York City is expecting the demand for mandatory child care vouchers to increase with the reinstatement of cash assistance work requirements.

New York City has estimated that it would need an additional \$240 million for FFY25 and a total of \$1.923 billion for FFY26—**\$900 million above the Governor's proposal—to maintain child care assistance for low-income families at the current level.** Without this funding, thousands of NYC families are at risk of losing



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child care assistance. In fact, the City has estimated that, as families recertify for continued assistance, each month, 4,000-7,000 children would lose child care assistance due to insufficient funding. We urge the State Legislature to ensure the final state budget includes the \$900 million increase needed by New York City to continue providing low-income families with child care assistance.

We also echo the recommendations made by the Empire State Campaign for Child Care. Based on our work on the ground assisting families, we want to note in particular the importance of the following recommendations:

- Among other steps to help address barriers for children with disabilities, the State should increase the child care enhanced rate for children with special needs to 130% of the market rate (up from 115%) and take steps to make it easier for child care programs to receive the enhanced rate. We have seen cases in which families have had difficulty finding child care for their children with disabilities, with providers turning away children and stating that they are not able to meet the needs of the children. Children with disabilities should be able to get the accommodations and support they need in their child care programs.
- The State should end the rule of tying child care assistance to parents' exact hours of work and should allow eligible children to participate in early childhood programs for the full day with their peers; a child's access to a full-day, high-quality early childhood education program should not be dependent on their parents' work hours.
- The State should end the rule that denies child care assistance to families if the parents earn less, on average, than minimum wage, removing a barrier currently in place for children from the lowest-income families.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 212-822-9534 or bbaez@advocatesforchildren.org.

Respectfully submitted,

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