



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Fiscal Committees
On the FY 2025-26 Executive Budget
Human Services Budget Hearing
February 12, 2025**

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on the 2025-26 New York State Executive Budget on behalf of DAY ONE Early Learning Community. DAY ONE's mission is to create a model teaching and learning community of children, family members, educators and future educators who work together to maximize every child's potential, from day one. DAY ONE currently operates in Dutchess and Ulster counties.

DAY ONE's signature program, the Teacher Apprenticeship Program equips community members to provide high quality early childhood education and launches them into the early childhood workforce. The Teacher Apprenticeship program has created a pipeline for entry into the essential child care field, however, low wages in this profession continues to create a barrier to recruitment of talented candidates and retention of employed graduates. Unfortunately, a passion for children does not pay the rent; those who enter the field deserve adequate compensation and benefits which can only be provided by robust and sustained support from public funds.

Background

New York State is in the midst of a child care crisis: with child care shortages impacting every county in the state. Among the factors impacting this crisis, the most urgent is workforce compensation and benefits. While DAY ONE appreciates that the Governor's Executive Budget proposes early childhood education funding including \$110 million in capital funds; there is significant concern that for the first time in three years there is no funding currently proposed for the child care workforce.

The median income for K-12 teachers in New York State is between \$60,252 and \$88,057; meanwhile the median income for a child care worker is \$33,000 – barely above the \$32,150 poverty threshold – and for a Pre-K educator, \$43,460. This wage gap presents a formidable barrier for prospective candidates in the field of early education. If a candidate who has a passion for children and learning can earn more money in retail or hospitality, economic necessity may decide their path.

Due to chronically low wages, 65% of early childhood worker families in New York State rely on at least one public assistance program. We at DAY ONE believe that a sustained investment in

early childhood education will yield both immediate and long term economic and societal benefits: as workers earn a living wage they are no longer dependent on government assistance, and are thus able to more fully participate in state and local economies.

Request

We are requesting Governor Hochul and the New York State Legislature to make sustained and reliable compensation and benefits for all members of the childcare workforce a priority in the state budget with the creation of a \$1.2 billion permanent fund.

Sincerely,



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