

Testimony from Gladys Jones

My name is Gladys Jones, and I am an early childhood educator and advocate for equitable, high-quality childcare for all. I am here today to speak on behalf of the countless childcare providers, parents, and families across New York who are navigating the current childcare crisis. We are not just talking about a lack of funding or resources; we are talking about the survival of a system that supports children, families, and communities.

Sustained and Reliable Compensation for the Child Care Workforce The backbone of the childcare system is the workforce—dedicated professionals who educate and nurture our youngest learners. Yet, despite their essential role, they are often left struggling to make ends meet. We must ensure sustained and reliable compensation and benefits for all members of the childcare workforce. These individuals deserve a livable wage, health benefits, and stability. How can we expect providers to care for our children when they cannot care for their own families? We must invest in them because when providers thrive, our children thrive.

Guaranteeing Child Care Assistance to Low-Income New Yorkers Access to childcare should not be a privilege reserved for a select few—it is a necessity for every family. Yet, thousands of low-income New Yorkers remain locked out of the system due to limited childcare assistance. We can guarantee that all eligible families have access to the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). This is not just about helping individual families; it is about strengthening our communities by enabling parents to work and children to grow in safe, enriching environments.

Eliminating Barriers for Children with Developmental Delays and Disabilities No child should be left behind. For too long, children with developmental delays and disabilities have faced barriers to accessing the care they need. We can create pathways for these children to receive specialized care and support. This investment will ensure that every child, regardless of ability, has a chance to learn, grow, and thrive.

Increasing Rates for Family, Friend, and Neighbor Providers Family, friend, and neighbor childcare providers are the unsung heroes of our communities. They step in to care for children when no other options are available, yet they are often underpaid and undervalued. Increasing their rates to 75% of the family childcare rate, and to 85% for providers eligible for the enhanced rate, is not just fair—it is necessary. We can recognize their contributions and ensure that they have the resources to provide safe, quality care.

A Vision for the Future Investments in our child care system are not just expenses—they are opportunities to transform the lives of providers, parents, and children across our state. Childcare is the foundation of our economy, our workforce, and our communities. Without it, we all suffer.