



**Testimony of Tamaé Memole**  
**Prevent Child Abuse New York**  
**Submitted to the New York State Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Human Services**  
**February 12, 2025**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I am Tamaé Memole, Managing Director, Primary Prevention at Prevent Child Abuse New York (PCA-NY).

PCA-NY's mission is to prevent child abuse in all forms. We are a statewide non-profit focused on three main services: training and technical assistance for professionals, policy and advocacy, and community awareness at state and local levels.

New York State spends millions of dollars each year on interventions and remediation for child abuse and neglect - secondary and tertiary interventions. While these programs and services are critically important, they are implemented after abuse and neglect have been identified.

**Primary prevention**, however, is focused on addressing the root causes of abuse and neglect – those factors that increase stress and pressure on families - and we know that family stress is the number one risk factor related to child abuse and neglect. Economic stability, family supports, maternal health, child care, nutrition, and other policies can help alleviate stressors and serve to prevent child abuse and other adverse childhood experiences. We advocate for evidence-based policies and practices that address the root causes of child abuse and neglect, promoting family and child wellbeing through economic security, stable housing, universal home visiting, quality childcare, and youth programs. Providing concrete supports to families minimizes stress and increases positive outcomes for children and families. While initiatives to improve many of these factors exist, they are not adequately funded or as comprehensive as they should be.

My testimony today urges investment at the state level to strengthen families and the communities in which they live as follows:

**OUTLAW AI CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIAL**

We strongly support Governor Hochul's proposal to outlaw artificial intelligence (AI) generated child sexual abuse material, by updating the law to account for today's technology to ensure AI generated child sexual abuse material will be treated as child pornography. We also strongly support Governor Hochul's proposal to increase funding for Family Advocacy Centers to

strengthen families and enhance resiliency for children who have suffered abuse or maltreatment.

### **ADD \$5 MILLION TO THE TRUST FUND**

We ask that you invest in primary prevention efforts by increasing funding for Family Opportunity Centers (FOCs) and Family Resource Centers (FRCs) through a \$5 million increase in the William B. Hoyt Memorial Children and Family Trust Fund (“Trust Fund”). The Trust Fund reaches thousands of children and families annually through FRCs and FOCs home visiting programs, parenting education programs, and other clinical and family strengthening programs. According to the 2023 OCFS Trust Fund Report, 86% of parents agreed that participating in Trust Fund programs helped them make their homes safer for their children.<sup>1</sup> A \$5 million increase for the Trust Fund to support FOCs and FRCs would expand the reach of the centers which help families enhance protective factors, build social capital, increase stability, improve functioning and self-reliance, and ***reduce the risk of child abuse.***<sup>2</sup>

### **INCREASE INVESTMENT TO END CHILD POVERTY**

We support the child tax credit which would offer families a refundable credit of up to \$1000 per child under four years of age and up to \$500 per child for children ages four to 16 is a good start toward reducing child poverty by 50% by the end of 2031. However, this proposal does not meet the full recommendations of the Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council (CPRAC). We strongly support New York Can End Child Poverty’s proposal to implement CPRAC’s complete recommendations in the budget including increasing cash assistance in alignment with legislation A.106 (Rosenthal)/S.1127 (Persaud) and A.108 (Rosenthal)/S.113 (Cleare).

### **INVEST IN CHILD CARE PROGRAM REFORMS**

We support the proposal in the Executive Budget to create the New York Coalition on Child Care to plot the path to universal childcare. In addition, we support the creation of a substitute pool for child care workers. Child care doesn’t work without the caregivers who comprise the child care workforce. These proposals are a first step to life-changing policies for families with young children. Right now, however, more is needed to help ensure fair access to child care, especially for families using family child care providers. We urge you to adopt the Empire State Campaign for Child Care proposals to provide sustained and reliable compensation and benefits to all members of the child care workforce. (\$1.2 billion); ensure all New Yorkers can access child

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<sup>1</sup> 2023 NYS OCFS Trust Fund Report <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/reports/2023-Trust-Fund-Annual-Infographic.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> National Family Support Network  
[https://www.nationalfamilysupportnetwork.org/files/ugd/ec0538\\_3879587b4f994b16a627bc0da43852e4.pdf](https://www.nationalfamilysupportnetwork.org/files/ugd/ec0538_3879587b4f994b16a627bc0da43852e4.pdf)

care, starting with guaranteeing child care assistance to eligible low-income New Yorkers (\$400 million); help eliminate barriers to accessing child care for children with developmental delays and disabilities (\$5 million); and pass two important child care reform bills S.5327A Brisport/A.4986A Hevesi, and A.1303 Clark/S.4924. We all benefit from a robust and affordable child care network. The future of our children and the entire economy of our state depend on it.

### **MODERNIZE NY'S PAID FAMILY LEAVE BENEFITS - PASS A.84 SOLAGES/S.172 RAMOS**

Modernize New York's paid medical leave system ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to a paid leave benefit that will support their needs in accordance with the provisions of bill A.84 Solages/S.172 Ramos ("the Bill"). New York's paid medical leave benefit ("temporary disability insurance" or "TDI"), which has not been updated since 1989, provides workers who need time off to care for their own health a mere \$170 per week with no job protection or guarantee of health insurance. There is a gross contradiction in the current system wherein a person caring for a sick family member can receive job-protected leave and benefits but if such person has the same need they have no job protection for time off taken and a meager benefit of \$170 per week. Updating TDI with the job protection, benefit caps, and leave improvements proposed in the bill will create a paid medical leave program that serves all New Yorkers. The bill will help improve maternal health outcomes and combat the Black maternal health crisis by ensuring that pregnant New Yorkers can afford to take time off for necessary care without risking their economic security. Importantly, it will also ensure that those who experience pregnancy loss can take the time they need to recover. The program's updates can be funded with only a small adjustment to current costs to employers and employees. These reforms are necessary, life changing, and affordable. We urge you to include the bill in the enacted budget.

### **INVEST IN UNIVERSAL HOME VISITING AND OTHER SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN**

We support the proposals in the Executive Budget that provide additional resources for children. **Free school breakfast and lunch for students will help ensure food security for students**, as well as save time and money for families across the state. We also support the NYS Birth Allowance for Beginning Year (BABY Benefit) and working with the national non-profit Baby2Baby to provide newborn supply boxes with education materials, self-care products, diapers, and other resources for people enrolled in Medicaid. Coupled with the expansion and improvement of the Women Infants and Children (WIC) program, the proposals to protect the healthy development of babies and families from the start. We urge you to go further by establishing a statewide universal home visiting program. According to the National Council of State Legislatures, high-quality home visiting programs help reduce incidents of child abuse;

improve birth outcomes and increase school readiness for children and for every dollar spent on home visiting up to \$5.70 is returned in reduced costs of “child protection, K-12 special education and grade retention, and criminal justice expenses.”<sup>3</sup> We think that’s money well spent.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests. More information on NY Can End Child Poverty and the Empire State Campaign for Child Care are submitted with this testimony. We know that the New York State Legislature is committed to meeting the needs of children and families. We ask that you bring these budget priorities to the negotiation table and fight for the children and families whose lives will be impacted by them. We can enact meaningful systems change and make bold investments in the wellbeing of children and families. **We know that primary prevention of child abuse, maltreatment, and adverse childhood experiences make life better for us all.**

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<sup>3</sup> NCSL Home Visiting: Improving Outcomes for Children (2022) <https://www.ncsl.org/human-services/home-visiting-improving-outcomes-for-children>