

# Too Many Children Left Behind

Make Quality Early Learning A Top Priority





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# Too Many Children Left Behind: *Make Quality Early Learning A Top Priority*



**“I think the inequity in education is probably the civil rights issue of our time. There are two education systems in this state. ... One for the rich and one for the poor and they are both public systems.”**

***--Candidate Andrew Cuomo, 2010***

**“We’re going to have a statewide pre-K program funded by the state. That’s what we said we’re going to do and that’s what we’re going to do,” Cuomo said. “I said all along that we’ll fund the need. ... And as quickly as cities can bring it online, we will fund it.”**

***--Governor Cuomo, 2014<sup>1</sup>***

**New York needs to fund the promise for quality pre-K for all and increase investment in quality child care.**

**The Governor is RIGHT to state that income inequality is growing and “too many are still left in the shadow of opportunity.” This is especially true for the state’s youngest children and their families. Without assistance in paying for child care, too many must make-do with makeshift arrangement that compromise their earnings as well as their children’s learning.<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/Gov-Andrew-Cuomo-Repeats-Pre-K-Funding-Vow-Mayor-Bill-de-Blasio-249330711.html>

<sup>2</sup>See study, “When Families Eligible for Child Care Subsidies Don’t Have One,” by Center for Children’s Initiatives” at [www.ccinyc.org](http://www.ccinyc.org)

# Highlights

- **In 2015-16, outside New York City, only 1,259 full-day pre-K spots—a gain of only 1%.** There are still 89,587 four-year olds waiting for full-day pre-K outside New York City.
- Mostly importantly, in low-income communities outside of New York City, a whopping 63% of four-year-olds have no seat in full-day pre-K.
- New York City provides full day pre-K to 68,547, an increase of 50,000 over the past two years, through the *Pre-K for All* program.
- **A disturbing 78% of children eligible for subsidized child care are being denied the subsidized child care for which they qualify.** Local communities around the state are simply running out of child care funding and refusing to even take applications from working families.

The Governor's budget for 2016 is WRONG on early care and learning, failing to invest in proven strategies -- quality pre-k and child care -- that can close the achievement gap and put children on a path to success. It includes \$22 million for full day pre-K for three-year olds and NO new funding for four-year olds. On child care, it includes only \$10 million to meet new federal standards when \$190 million is necessary. Without new funding, thousands of low-income children could lose their access to child care.





## Recommendations

**\*An additional \$150 million to expand access to quality pre-K focused on high-need three- and four-year-olds, including:**

\*\$125 million to expand access to quality pre-K in both early childhood programs in the community and public schools for both three and four year olds.

\*\$25 million to promote strategies, such as professional development and technical assistance to promote quality programs and timely implementation. These efforts should be aligned with the state's quality improvement system, QUALITYstarsNY.

\* Maintain SED's authority over pre-K, and continue with upfront funding to school districts rather than establish a new pre-K grants board to oversee the application process.

**\*An additional \$190 million for child care services to support the costs of meeting new federal standards and protect services for tens of thousands of children.<sup>3</sup>**

These investments in quality full-day pre-K and quality child care help advance the agenda of the Governor's own Education Reform Commission, which recognized the need for a "pipeline" of educational services to prepare children for success in school and beyond.

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<sup>3</sup>All told New York State is now indicating that to meet these new requirements will cost New York State at least \$190 million. The administration has not provided specific information on the number of slots that will need to be reduced to meet these new expense. In 2013, as the new rules were being developed, state officials estimated that if the costs of implementing the new health and safety regulations cost \$71 million and could translate into at least 21,000 children losing care across the state. With the increased estimates of meeting the CCDBG requirements, the number of slots lost is potentially higher. For more information, contact [bholcomb@ccinyc.org](mailto:bholcomb@ccinyc.org).

# High-Quality Early Learning Opportunities: A Wise Investment in the Short and Long Run

The evidence for state investment in early learning is clear and compelling: The benefits of investing in quality early learning programs – for children, families, schools, communities and taxpayers are well-documented.<sup>4</sup>

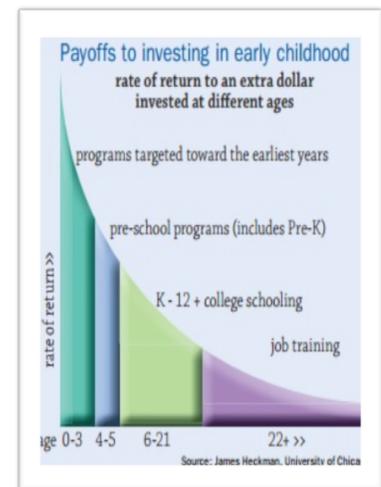
- \*Parents can be more productive workers and increase their earnings,

- \* Employers can attract and retain employees, with affordable child care and pre-K the new “must-haves” for middle class families.

- \* Communities have more economic activity, less crime, more successful schools and stable families.

- \*Taxpayers see a return of \$8 on every dollar invested.

Federal Reserve economists – as well as Nobel-Laureate economist James Heckman – say there is simply no better public investment to be made. The return on the typical economic development projects – from sports stadiums to convention centers – simply can’t match the benefits that accrue from one that supports children’s early learning and development.



No wonder that business leaders, pediatricians, law enforcement and clergy are all speaking up, along with parents, early childhood and public school educators and advocates, in favor of new state investment in quality early learning opportunities.

The Chair of NYS American Academy of Pediatrics Warren Seigel, supports a significant additional state investment to build and maintain high-quality programs for children. “Early brain development/learning skills and key social/emotional development is directly related to the quality of care that children experience. The state must step up and invest state dollars to assure that all child care program are high-quality and accessible. This is a key investment in the future of New York,” he said.

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<sup>4</sup>Decades of highly-regarded research have documented the benefits that accrue from public investments in high-quality early childhood programs, including the Perry Preschool Project, the Acebedarian Study, the Chicago Longitudinal Study and evaluations of New Jersey’s Abbott prekindergarten program, a on-going year-by-year research project following the progress of the three- and four-year-olds enrolled in that program. For a summary of the key research, see “High Quality Prekindergarten Is a Wise Investment” posted at the National Women’s Law Center. For more in-depth research reviews, visit the National Institute for Early Education Research at [www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org), for the studies on all aspects of early childhood education, including benefits, best practices and the emerging science on implementation of state pre-k programs. Also see the Heckman Equation, [www.Heckmanequation.org](http://www.Heckmanequation.org), for research on the return on investment in early childhood education.

By contrast, the failure to invest in early education – in both the short- and long-term is also well-documented.<sup>5</sup> Children without access to quality early learning opportunities are more likely to start out Kindergarten up to two years behind their more affluent peers. They are also likely to stay behind right through their elementary and secondary years. The costs to them – and all New Yorkers – is also notable. High school drop-outs are likely to have few job opportunities, low earnings and nearly twice as likely to be arrested. Research shows that at-risk children left out of quality pre-K are five times more likely to engage in criminal activity by age 27 than children attending quality pre-K.



## **Quality Child Care: *Another Key Investment in School Readiness and Economic Opportunity***

Quality child care is the companion investment to one in pre-K, one that reaches even younger children, and also offers the ability to offer year-round services and extended learning time. Recent research shows many young children lose ground when school is closed in the summer.<sup>6</sup> Families also need to know their children are safe and learning, while they are at work. School-day, school-year services are simply not adequate to meet the needs of young children and their families. As an additional investment, child care funding offers another strategy to boost school readiness and expand economic opportunities across New York.

With three-fourths of all parents in the workforce by the time their children are three, quality child care is a pressing necessity for most New York families.

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<sup>5</sup>See the First Five Years Fund for a comprehensive look at the research and polling, see [www.ffyf.org](http://www.ffyf.org).

<sup>6</sup>[www.childreinsinstitute.net](http://www.childreinsinstitute.net).

But it is also getting harder to afford. New York is now home to the highest costs for child care in the country,<sup>7</sup> with the average tuition for private programs now costing \$13,000 across the state.<sup>8</sup> Care for children under three is even more expensive, topping \$14,000 in many programs. That cost eats up nearly every penny of take-home pay that a parent working full-time, year-round earning minimum wage makes in a year. Working mothers with young children are more likely than workers overall to be in low-wage jobs. Child care takes half the income of low-income working parents.<sup>9</sup> The cost of child care produces sticker shock even in middle-class and professional families, now that it rivals tuition at a public college – and comes at a time in their careers when they themselves may still be paying off their own college loans.

Unable to afford quality care in a stable program, parents face difficult choices. Few can afford to stop working, so their option, increasingly, is to make-do with make-shift arrangements that often fall-through, disrupting their children’s learning power along with their earning power.<sup>10</sup> “I had to change my time, arrive late, miss days of work and my overall work performance was negatively impacted,” one mother reported. “It is unfair to the middle-class,” another parent said “We pay taxes and parents should be able to receive help with their children’s education. Parents are struggling.”

New York’s official policy is to offer a subsidy to working parents earning up to 200% of poverty and to ensure that all families on public assistance have the child care they need to achieve economic independence. In real-life terms, that means a family of three earning up to \$40,180 is eligible for financial assistance in paying for child care.



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<sup>7</sup>Child Care Aware 2015, annual study affordability of child care, at [www.usa/childcareaware.org](http://www.usa/childcareaware.org).

<sup>8</sup>Research conducted by CGR, Inc, 2014 for the League of Women Voters, at [www.cgr.org](http://www.cgr.org).

<sup>9</sup>Blank, Schulman and Frohlich, study working mothers in low-wage jobs, 2014, at [www.nwlc.org](http://www.nwlc.org).

<sup>10</sup>See What Happens When There Is No Subsidy,” study by the Center for Children’s Initiatives, [www.ccinyc.org](http://www.ccinyc.org).

# State-Funded Full-Day Pre-K: *An Unfulfilled Promise*

New York State has long been a pioneer on early childhood education, with a brain trust of early education experts and dedicated practitioners in the field and has rightfully gained significant national attention for the expansion of prekindergarten. This year's budget proposal by governor Cuomo includes a small amount of funding for pre-K for three-year-olds and no new funding for four-year-olds.

The investment in the Governor's budget falls far short of the commitment make pre-K truly universal for all four-year-olds, and a five-year-plan to meet this goal that was included in the 2014 budget. **Governor Cuomo pledged a "blank check," to fund districts as they came forward with a plan.** Last year, the Governor added three-year-olds to the state's pre-K programs. In 2014, the first year of the commitment to universal full-day pre-K for all four-year-olds, state leaders made the most significant investment, with \$340 million allocated for full-day pre-K, with \$300 million earmarked for New York City. In the last two years, New York City met its goal, with more than 68,500 four-year-olds now enrolled in Pre-K for All. But the investment for the rest of the state lagged far behind, even though many districts came forward with a plan.<sup>11</sup>

**A whopping 63% of the state's four-year-olds in low-income communities outside of New York City have no seat in full-day pre-K.**

**Too many New Yorkers are "left out and left behind," as the governor stated.** The state's youngest children are now more likely than ever to be living in poverty, and are out of luck finding access to a quality early learning opportunity.

There are 109,161 eligible four-year olds outside of New York City. Of these, 89,574 four-year olds are still waiting for a full day pre-K seat. The research is clear on the lasting benefits of high quality full day pre-K for children and particularly for those in lower income households. In this report we highlight children in low income communities because of the great impact that pre-K can have on their lives. Children from lower income background attending high quality full day pre-K begin Kindergarten with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in school and later in life by doing better in school, grad-

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<sup>11</sup>Last year, 75 districts outside of New York City submitted proposals to expand or add pre-K services, requesting more than \$65 million. But with only \$30 million for pre-K in last year's budget, just 34 districts received funding. Many more, including 14 high-need districts, are still waiting.



uating, going to college and getting better jobs. Outside of New York City, there are 37,339 four-year olds in high need districts. Currently, only 13,956 are in full day pre-K, which leaves another 23,383 or 63% of them still waiting for a full-day seat. (See chart 1, below)

Chart 1

Number of 4-year-olds outside of NYC	Number of 4-year-olds outside of NYC with no full-day pre-K	Percent of 4-year-olds outside of NYC with no full-day pre-K
109,161	89,587	82%
Number of 4-year-olds in High Need school districts outside of NYC	Number of 4-year-olds in High Need school districts outside of NYC with no full-day pre-K	Percent of 4-year-olds in High Need school districts outside of NYC with no full-day pre-K
37,339	23,383	63%

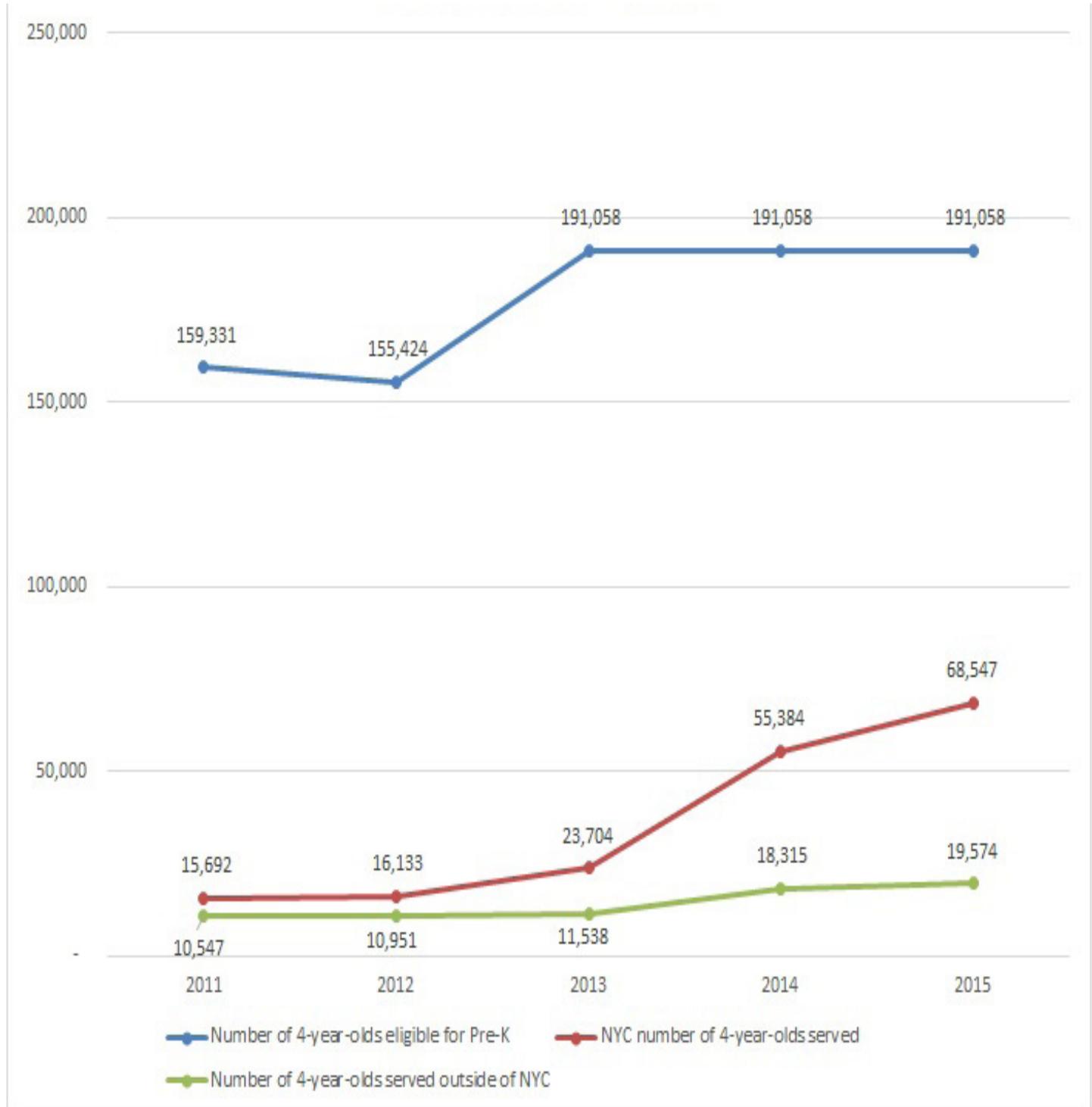
**Only 1,259 new full-day seats were added for four-year-olds last year outside of New York City – meaning just 1.2% of four-year olds gained new seats.**

**Today, a whopping 63% of the four-year-olds living in low-income communities outside of New York City still wait for the promised seat in a full-day pre-K program.**

Yet, Governor Cuomo added no new money for expansion of pre-K services to four-year olds once again this year. As the numbers show, districts outside New York City are trailing behind, with funding to meet the need for just 19,574 four-year olds. (Chart 2, See page 12) The 19,574 represents just 18% of all the eligible four-year olds outside of New York City.

# Number of children attending in full-day pre-K vs. total number of 4-year-olds expected to enroll<sup>12</sup>

Chart 2



<sup>12</sup>The total number of four-year-olds expected to enroll in full-day prekindergarten is based on the following assumptions: 85% of the children attending Kindergarten, minus children enrolled in special education schools. Kindergarten enrollment numbers are taken from the NYS school report card database. New York City enrollment numbers were provided by the New York City Department of Education.

## New York City forges ahead

New York City continued to forge ahead with its pre-K for All program launched in 2014. The city added 13,163 new full-day seats for four-year-olds in the 2015-16 school year, reporting it offered a seat to all families that applied for one. The city also made good use of the state pre-K funding to make quality enhancements, including expanded professional development and technical support and some improvement in compensation for pre-K teachers working in classrooms in community programs

But overall, the 2014 investment in the Governor's new full-day pre-K program has not made much progress in meeting the needs of families and children outside New York City. Last year's investment of \$30 million for high need 3's and 4's added just 1,259 seats for four-year-olds, 1% of those eligible outside New York City. Districts all across the state came forward with a plan but were shut out. Tens of thousands of four year olds statewide still need a seat. (See chart 3).

## Communities outside of New York City are asking where's my pre-K?

Chart 3

Region	Number of 4-year-olds	Total Served in full day 2015-16	Number of 4-year-olds with NO full day pre-K	Percent Still Waiting	Number of 4-year-old new seats added in 2015-16	Percent of 4-year-old new seats added in 2015-16
<b>Capital Region Total</b>	9,249	1,966	7,283	79%	136	1%
<b>Central NY Total</b>	7,559	1,987	5,572	74%	154	2%
<b>Finger Lakes Total</b>	10,963	2,866	8,097	74%	160	1%
<b>Hudson Valley Total</b>	25,560	2,787	22,773	89%	0	0%
<b>Long Island Total</b>	28,132	2,402	25,730	91%	451	2%
<b>Mohawk Valley Total</b>	4,508	1,035	3,473	77%	114	3%
<b>North Country Total</b>	4,320	371	3,949	91%	90	2%
<b>Southern Tier Total</b>	6,433	2,222	4,211	65%	111	2%
<b>Western NY Total</b>	12,437	3,938	8,499	68%	43	0%

For methodology, see back cover

The current inequities in access to full day pre-K for four-year-olds across the state are striking. Poverty is rising for children in inner-ring suburbs, small cities and rural communities and for these children, pre-K is essential. For most parents, a part-time service simply doesn't work. Nor does it work for families in rural areas who may have to travel a great distance to get to pre-K. Children may spend as much time travelling as they are in pre-K. Studies also show that a full-day program produces better outcomes for children.

## **Adding Pre-K for Three-Year Olds: *Let's Get It Right***

The Governor's proposed budget includes \$22 million for pre-K for high-need three-year-olds, a move that draws on the evidence, as well as the recommendations of his Education Reform Commission which called for a pipeline of services, birth to third grade to support children's learning and healthy development. The proposal appropriately calls for the new investment in districts that already have pre-K for four-year-olds, creating a two-year pre-K experience, which is more effective. Evidence shows that starting early childhood education at earlier ages can lead to larger gains for children.<sup>13</sup> States can produce even better outcomes when the services start early and are aligned, from birth through school age.<sup>14</sup>

But the modest investment – just \$22 million for the whole state –is inadequate. Funding must support not only access, but also appropriate standards and practices, to promote the learning and development of these younger children, as set forth in the state's Early Learning Guidelines. That means that the rates for three-year-olds must be appropriately adjusted to support full day quality programs with appropriate class size. Providing pre-K to three-year-olds is more expensive due to the higher costs needed for age appropriate smaller class sizes.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>See the landmark study, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*, published by the National Academy of Science, at [www.nas.edu](http://www.nas.edu). Also, see Abbott Preschool Program Longitudinal Effects Study (APPLES) at [www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org) for benefits of offering pre-k to three- and four-year-olds.

<sup>14</sup>For the latest research, see the Foundation for Child Development's research on P-3 early learning, at [www.fcd-us.org](http://www.fcd-us.org).

<sup>15</sup>State officials have established a rate of \$10,000 per child for four-year-olds in the 2014 Full-Day Pre-K program and in the federal Preschool Development grant expansion in five districts. To date, there has been no higher rate established for three-year-olds., the rate should be adjusted to reflect the smaller class size necessary for a quality program. These rates should stay in effect until the state establishes a pre-K aid formula to support a more coherent statewide pre-K program as a core educational service. That aid formula should be sustainable, equitable, transparent and appropriate to support quality standards, as proposed in the CEE-CCI Roadmap, *Making Pre-K Truly Universal* in New York State, which sets forth a detailed analysis of the financing, as well as the standards and infrastructure and a path to achieve these goals that is in line with state officials' commitment to making pre-K truly universal. Roadmap available at [www.ccinyc.org](http://www.ccinyc.org).

Early childhood programs in the community have considerable expertise in serving younger preschool children. Any new educational investment in three-year-olds must also build on the existing expertise in the community to serve young children, by fully engaging with existing programs in the community as was done with the launch and expansion of pre-K in most communities. The state's current Pre-K programs include a mandate for at least 10% of the investment to be made in community programs, which already serve large numbers of young children from birth to five. Today, more than half of those services are offered in early childhood programs in the community, a strategy that maximizes choices for parents, creates more opportunity for the extended-day year-round services families and children need. Building on child care, Head Start, Preschool Special education and other investments also offer opportunity for more comprehensive service for these three- and four-year-olds. This makes the most of scarce resources and existing investment to best serve these younger children.

## **Invest in Strategies to Promote Quality**

The state's pre-K programs have high quality standards and expectations, but many districts and programs still lack the resources and infrastructure to meet those benchmarks. It is critical that the state step up and make the appropriate investment in technical assistance and professional development to assure that all districts, programs and staff have the resources and tools they need to launch and maintain quality early learning programs known to produce better outcomes for children. A growing body of evidence on pre-K implementation documents the importance of the dissemination of best practices and on-going professional development to support effective teaching and developmentally-appropriate practice. Both school leaders and early childhood programs in the community can benefit from supports and strategies to promote effective teaching, stronger parent engagement and leadership development to support all aspects of children's development and learning. In addition to the \$125 million to expand access, state leaders should also include \$25 million to promote strategies, such as professional development, coaching and mentoring and other evidence-based methods that help programs meet quality benchmarks. These efforts should be aligned with the state's quality rating and improvement system, QUALITYstarsNY.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>QUALITYstarsNY is a voluntary system to support early care and education programs, including child care and pre-K. For more information see [www.QUALITYstarsNY.org](http://www.QUALITYstarsNY.org)

## **Maintain the State Education Department's Authority over Pre-K**

The Governor's budget includes a proposal to create a new Empire State Prekindergarten Grants Board to award new pre-K grants. This proposal does not advance the state's goal to make pre-K truly universal. Instead, it further complicates the state's pre-K programs. Currently, there are six pre-K programs, each with different requirements and rates of funding. The State Education Department has a well-developed system for managing and awarding grants. The enacted budget must reject the creation of this board, which takes the decision-making process away from educational experts and puts it in the hands of political appointees, a move that makes access to pre-K subject to political manipulations. SED should have responsibility for this funding, as part of the state's Pre-K to 12 Education system.

### **Child Care in Crisis:**

#### *More Than 21,000 children at risk of Losing Care*

The public investment in New York has always lagged far behind the need. Today, the state serves just 22% of the children eligible for a subsidy. That is a shameful record for a state where child poverty rates are growing, and so many working families are falling behind. That means that four out of five eligible children left behind.

In the coming year, the outlook grows even more bleak, if state leaders do not make a new investment. New York faces a shortfall of at least \$190 million in funding needed to implement new federal standards and to maintain current programs as the costs of operating a program rise. It is urgent for state leaders to stand up for kids and address this shortfall. Otherwise, more than 21,000 children across the state stand to lose care.

There is widespread support for the goals of the new federal standards, which aim to keep children safe and healthy. Congress enacted the new standards, by a nearly unanimous vote to reauthorize the Child Care and Development Block Grant. Taken together, the standards aim to create safer, healthy and more stable child care arrangements for children and families. But the Governor includes a paltry \$10 million toward the \$190 million shortfall in his executive budget—leaving a yawning gap in the budget and urgent needs unmet for children and families.

Even before this current shortfall, advocates noted that a “perfect storm” was under way

that could undermine the state's fragile child care services. With declining state and federal investment and expectations and standards rising, many programs struggle to keep their door open. "More and more working families are being squeezed out of the program, stretching New York's child care to the breaking point," the Empire Justice Center reports.<sup>17</sup> Between 2007 and 2013, 38 of New York's 57 counties outside of New York City reduced access to subsidies, on average by about 27%.<sup>18</sup> New York City also reduced the number of children served. More than 10,000 children across the state have lost access to child care assistance.<sup>19</sup>

With their own local budgets strained and a cap on taxes and local municipal aid, many counties simply ran out of child care funding before the end of the fiscal year. As a result, they have tightened eligibility, raised co-pays and stopped serving new families. Some even stopped taking applications at all. "I have no idea what I will do," one New York City mom confided. "As of right now I don't have any options and I need to work to support my kids. On the flip side, I can't leave them home alone. So what am I supposed to do?"<sup>20</sup>

## **Shrinking Access to Child Care:** *The Crisis Unfolds, County by County*<sup>21</sup>

New York has a county-administered child care system, but counties are running out of money, even as the need grows. Some are simply refusing to accept new applications. Nearly all are tightening eligibility, falling far short of the state's goal of serving all families at 200% of poverty.

In some areas, just 7% of the need is met. Rochester and New York City currently rank the most generous, but even in those two cities, three out of four eligible children do not get a slot.

Low-income parents, desperate for services, are often persistent, even when the chances of

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<sup>17</sup>See "Still Mending the Patchwork," Empire Justice Center at [www.empirejustice.org](http://www.empirejustice.org).

<sup>18</sup>CGR research for League of Women's Voters, [www.cgr.org](http://www.cgr.org).

<sup>19</sup>The National Women's Law Center has compiled a state-by-state analysis of the impact of flat-funding for child care over the last decade, as the costs of operating a program grew, the demand for services increased.

<sup>20</sup>Parent included in Campaign for Children report, New York Parent Voices, prepared by Stephanie Gendell, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York. [sgendell@cccnewyork.org](mailto:sgendell@cccnewyork.org).

<sup>21</sup>In last year's budget, Facilitated Enrollment funding allows some families with incomes over 165% of poverty to receive subsidies.

\*\*Information provided by Susan Antos at the Empire Justice Center

landing a subsidy are slim. When Amanda Gage in Rochester was first denied a subsidy, she panicked she recalled. With three children to support, both she and her husband need to work and could not afford private tuition in local child care programs for all three.

“We considered one of us quitting our job, but honestly, we couldn’t afford that either. We persisted for months and we were again denied due to lack of funds available.” Their situation grew worse after an illness caused lost time at work – and a drop in income.

Finally, after calling every day, they were approved. “We were shocked beyond belief.”

The subsidy “impacted our life dramatically,” she reports. The children are in a “stable, friendly and safe environment,” a program that “goes above and beyond for each and every one of the children.”

“If we did not have this resource available to us, I honestly don’t know where we’d be – possibly homeless and jobless. It has been a real struggle this past year, there were weeks we didn’t know how to put food on the table or if we could pay rent.”<sup>22</sup>

The lack of public investment and the inability of parents to afford private tuition also weakens programs and threatens their efforts to offer quality services. Child care resource and referral agencies, as well as advocates and school districts across the state, which work with both programs and parents, report that a growing number are closing their doors, and many report it increasingly difficult to attract, retain and appropriately support staff.<sup>23</sup>

Early childhood educators still face miserably low wages. In fact, compensation for staff in child care programs has not improved in 25 years, according to a recent study by the National Center for the Early Childhood Workforce.<sup>24</sup> “Quality of care is a function of the

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<sup>22</sup>Amanda Gage’s and other parent stories are included in the 2016 edition of the Storybook, *Build a Better Future With Early Childhood Education*, prepared by the Early Childhood Development Initiative, the Children’s Agenda and Generations, a local child care program in Rochester. For more information, contact Marsha Dumka at [marsha.dumka@gmail.com](mailto:marsha.dumka@gmail.com).

<sup>23</sup>Interviews conducted in fall of 2014 represent the on-the-ground experience in communities in Rochester, Buffalo, Albany, Hudson Valley, New York City and Long Island. While there is always considerable turnover in early childhood programs because of the under-funding, the reports were that even the most stable and long-term and high-quality programs face challenges because of the lack of public investment.

<sup>24</sup>Whitebook, Phillips and Howes, “Worthy Work: STILL Unlivable Wages,” 2014. Available at [irle.berkeley.edu](http://irle.berkeley.edu).

ability to maintain highly-qualified personnel,” says one program director in New York City. “I would say (low) salaries and (limited) health benefits are driving potential hires away from our program.”<sup>25</sup>

## **The Smart Choice: *Invest in Quality Early Learning in 2016***

Simply put, the case is clear for investment in early learning is clear and convincing. If New York does not make additional investments, it will cost us all too much. Today’s four-year-olds are entering Kindergarten next year and they must be prepared to succeed. Today’s three-year-olds will be entering pre-K. All children benefit from improved and expanded early learning opportunities. They are a game-changer for children, families, schools, communities and taxpayers.

**Too many children are still waiting. Families want to know: Where’s my pre-K? Where’s my child care?**

**State leaders need to answer by standing up for kids! Make quality pre-K and child care a top priority in this year’s enacted state budget.**



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<sup>25</sup>Campaign for Children Survey of Early Learn providers, January 2015.

# Methodology

The data on state pre-K funding and enrollment used for the analysis in this report was obtained from the NYS State Education Department. We then conducted our own independent analysis. To calculate the percent of four-year-olds that gained access to full day pre-K in 2015-16, we used the enrollment in the new State Funded Full Day program divided by the number of four-year olds expected to enroll in voluntary pre-K.

The total number of four-year-olds expected to enroll in full-day prekindergarten is based on the following assumptions: 85% of the children attending Kindergarten, minus children enrolled in special education schools. Kindergarten enrollment numbers are taken from the NYS school report card database. New York City enrollment numbers were provided by the New York City Department of Education.

We then sorted the data by the Department of Labor economic regions.  
-February, 2016



The Alliance for Quality Education is a coalition mobilizing communities across the state to keep New York true to its promise of ensuring a high-quality public school education to all students regardless of zip code. Combining its legislative and policy expertise with grassroots organizing, AQE advances proven-to-work strategies that lead to student success and echoes a powerful public demand for a high-quality public school education for all of New York's students.



The Center for Children's Initiatives (CCI), formerly known as Child Care, Inc., champions the right of all children to start life with the best possible foundation of learning, care and health. Realizing the long term benefits – for children, for families and for our society – CCI works to ensure investments in quality and supports for working families to give all of our children the opportunity for a bright future.



Citizen Action of New York is a grassroots membership organization taking on big issues that are at the center of transforming society – issues like: quality education and after-school programs for all our kids; guaranteed quality, affordable health care; public financing of election campaigns; dismantling racism and promoting racial justice; and a more progressive tax system.



PPEF was founded in 1986 to address critical social, economic, racial and environmental issues facing low and moderate income New York State residents. Our areas of work have included health care, education, after-school programs, voter participation, economic development and consumer issues. PPEF uses many tools in its work, including grassroots organizing, research and policy development, public education on a wide range of policy issues, and community outreach.