



Empire State Campaign for Child Care

All Families; No Barriers

Priority: Break down unnecessary barriers preventing the child care system from working for families and providers.

The Need

To access child care assistance, families must navigate significant administrative hurdles that include processing delays and waitlists, too frequent recertifications, burdensome documentation requirements, and inequities in eligibility rules across counties. Notably, Governor Hochul, in her January 2023 State of the State address, acknowledged the existence of these barriers and their intentional creation to discourage participation, and committed to taking steps to eliminate them. Governor Hochul stated: “[l]ess than 10% of families who are eligible for child care assistance are actually enrolled. This is the legacy of a system that is difficult to navigate – by design. That has to change.”¹

The Solution

The comprehensive and most equitable solution for New York is to implement universal, publicly-funded, high-quality child care for all. All families; no administrative hurdles.

On the road to universal, New York should continue breaking down access barriers by streamlining application processes, reducing wait-times for approval, ending long waitlists and too-frequent recertifications, take aim at unrealistic rules like limiting assistance to the exact hours of work, and continuing to chip away at confusing, inequitable variations in rules among counties.

Among the steps New York should take this year:

- ▶ Eliminate income cliffs. **Estimated cost: \$100M.**
 - The Executive Budget proposes to increase income eligibility to 85% of State Median Income from the current 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL); covered by the approximately \$1.587B allocated for child care subsidies. ESCCC supports this proposal.
 - The Executive Budget proposes to reduce family co-pays to 1% of income over the FPL across the state, which would cut costs for families receiving child care assistance significantly. ESCCC supports this proposal.
- ▶ Categorical assistance eligibility for families enrolled in other public assistance programs (SNAP, Medicaid, WIC, etc.). **Estimated cost: \$1 billion**

- The Governor proposed in her State of State to adopt categorical income eligibility for families enrolled in other public assistance programs; an estimated 83,400 children will have easier access to child care assistance. ESCCC supports this proposal.
- ▶ Presumptive eligibility to eliminate long wait times for families to gain access to assistance. This practice is commonly used with other benefits, ensuring parents don't lose job opportunities while waiting for cumbersome applications to be processed. **Estimated cost: \$5 million**
- The Executive Budget contains no proposal.
- ▶ Statewide, electronic application process.
- The Governor proposed in her State of State a statewide electronic application process. ESCCC supports this proposal and urges NY to consult with stakeholders to ensure success.
- ▶ End New York's rule of tying child care access to parents' exact hours of work, a rule that makes it difficult for working people, including parents in a growing gig economy with fluctuating schedules, to access child care assistance.
- The bill signed into law in December 2022 purporting to make this change does not. (A.7661 (Hevesi)/S.6655-A (Brisport)). ESCCC calls upon Governor Hochul, together with the Legislature, to pass an amended bill without delay.

New York's significant and historic expansions of income eligibility for child care assistance have the potential to change the life trajectory of tens of thousands of New York families and children. And yet, for many families, these expansions remain in name only because they cannot overcome the many administrative barriers to actually gain access to assistance. New York has the power this year to remove many of the barriers that keep New York families from having a real opportunity to access high-quality, affordable child care.

For Further Reading, Scan This QR Code:



¹ [Remarks as Prepared: Governor Hochul Delivers 2023 State of the State | Governor Kathy Hochul \(ny.gov\)](#)