



Empire State Campaign for Child Care 2026 Top Budget Priorities

We urge the Legislature to adopt and build from the Governor's proposed historic investments in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), Pre-K and universal child care pilot projects. If included in the final budget, and thoughtfully implemented, these investments will be game-changing for New York families, and will move New York State decisively closer to achieving statewide universal child care.

Chief among the strengths of the Governor's proposed \$1.7B investment in early childhood education is that it prioritizes low-income families in the rollout to universal child care by directing \$1.2B of those funds to recurring funding for CCAP. If these funds are truly recurring, this could allow most of the more than 30 counties that have closed enrollment to CCAP to reopen and be able to keep pace with growing demand.

In New York's 2026-2027 Budget, We Call on New York Leaders to Make the Following Investments in Child Care and Pre-K:

Build upon the Governor's strong child care proposals by providing ongoing and reliable compensation supplements to all members of the child care workforce until New York has achieved statewide universal child care that pays providers adequate rates to pay the workforce a thriving wage. (\$1.2B)

- Create a permanent state fund to increase child care worker compensation sufficient to offer all members of the child care workforce a significant boost in income (Child Care Workforce Pay Equity Fund S.5533 (Brisport)/A.492 (Hevesi)); and
- Develop a plan for subsequent years to establish a minimum pay scale and career ladder based on agreed-upon criteria to inform compensation supplement levels after the base pay scale for all has been increased.

Adopt the Governor's proposed \$1.2B recurring investment in New York's Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), and add additional funding as needed to ensure no eligible families are turned away or placed on waitlists.

- To end the enrollment closures and waitlists for CCAP currently in place in more than 30 counties around the state, this funding must be ongoing, not one-time, because demand for CCAP is steadily growing. Counties must be assured the new level of funding will continue to be confident they can accept new CCAP families, and families must be able to rely on ongoing support to balance their family budgets. Further, the funds must be distributed to counties in an equitable manner, and without delay.

- New York City's Administration for Children's Services has shared a \$1.2B increased budget need to be able to continue to maintain a steady caseload and prevent attrition.
- Trends in enrollment and the closure status of nearly 30 counties outside New York City suggest that counties outside New York City need \$500M to meet growing demand for child care.

Adopt the Governor's proposal to invest \$60M to support Community Care models in three communities, and add more funds if necessary to ensure they are truly universal, and are treated not as one-time pilots, but as a bridge to statewide universal child care.

- We welcome and support the Governor's plan to make participation in these models available to all without means testing and urge that they are also free from immigration status and work reporting requirements. The models should be administered like Pre-K, available to all, with minimal enrollment requirements.
- All modalities of care—including center and home-based child care providers—must be able to participate in these models.
- Two models the Empire State Campaign for Child Care recommends are: **Community eligibility projects**, making child care fully free and available to all families with children in communities where a significant number of families with low incomes reside. And **Capped-fee projects** where all families in a project community could access child care through this project at a cost of \$100 a week (\$20/day). Under both models, participating families would not be subject to income, work, or immigration status tests.

Adopt the Governor's proposal to invest approximately \$500M to achieve truly universal Pre-K statewide for 4-year olds by the 2028-29 school year, to create a uniform statewide Pre-K grant funded at either \$10,000 per pupil or the district's current selected Foundation Aid per pupil, whichever is greater, and to support NYC in achieving truly universal 3-K.

- Expansions of Pre-K along with 3K and 2-Care in NYC must be undertaken in a manner that fully integrates center and home-based child care programs into the expansions. This is necessary to ensure expansions do not unintentionally destabilize child care programs and lead to a greater shortage of infant and toddler seats.

The Empire State Campaign for Child Care is a statewide coalition of parents, child care educators, and advocates who believe that every family in New York State deserves high quality, universal child care and that every member of the child care workforce deserves to earn a thriving wage. Learn more about the Campaign and our NYS Child Care for All plan to achieve statewide universal child care at <https://empirestatechildcare.org>.