



Empire State Campaign for Child Care

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Dede Hill, Director of Policy, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy

(518) 463-1896, ext. 138 / dhill@scaany.org

Blue Carreker, Facilitator, Empire State Campaign for Child Care; Campaign Manager, Citizen Action of New York & Public Policy and Education Fund of New York

(518) 466-8500 / bcarreker@citizenactionny.org

Parents, Providers and Advocates Express Disappointment that Child Care is Largely Overlooked in Governor Cuomo's 2019 Women's Agenda

Governor Cuomo's 2019 Women's Agenda unveiled yesterday contains no proposals to meaningfully expand access to quality care to the thousands of families currently unable to access child care assistance, although child care is among the most critical issues facing New York women in their role as parents, as child care educators, and as small business owners.

New York's failure to lead on child care stands in stark contrast to visionary proposals coming out of Washington. One leading proposal is Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA)'s Child Care for Working Families that would increase the number of children who could receive child care assistance by more than 13 times the current amount, with particular attention to infant and toddler care.

Access to affordable quality child care is essential to women's economic security. Lack of equitable access to quality, affordable child care causes many parents – overwhelmingly women – to drop out of the workforce for longer periods of time, sharply reducing family income for the period the caregiver is out of the workforce, and lowering future earnings and retirement savings. Child care expenses are also a leading contributor to family poverty. Yet, due to underinvestment in child care for low-income families, it is estimated that fewer than 20% of eligible low-income families who could benefit from receiving subsidy assistance from New York State receive it.

And, underinvestment in New York's child care system harms the child care workforce, which is overwhelmingly women. Many of the child care educators caring for New York's youngest are paid wages that leave them living at or near poverty. The average median wage for a child care educator in New York is \$12.38 an hour or \$25,760 per year.

Finally, the lack of investment in child care means that child care providers, which are largely small, women-run businesses, cannot keep up with escalating operating costs because subsidy

reimbursement levels have remained flat since 2015. Among the costs that have soared are the increasing minimum wage, which currently (as of January 1, 2019), ranges from \$15/hr for large employers in New York City, to \$11.10/hr in communities outside of New York City, Long Island and Westchester.

Yesterday's insufficient attention to child care in the 2019 Women's Agenda event mirrors the Governor's Executive Budget which does not propose a real investment to expand access to quality child care in the 2019-2020 Executive Budget.

Yet, we remain hopeful that New York will lead THIS YEAR on child care. Budget negotiations are still underway, and we are heartened by Lieutenant Governor Hochul's recent statement that child care is her number one issue, and a recent letter from more than 50 Assemblymembers requesting that Assembly Speaker Heastie include substantial increased funding for child care in the Assembly one-house budget proposal. We are looking to the final 2019-2020 New York budget to contain substantial new investment in child care subsidies – the state's principal means of providing equitable access to quality care to low-income working families, and of supporting the state's child care industry.

We are also hopeful that New York's newly convened Child Care Availability Task Force will be given the resources, support and platform it needs to create, and implement a comprehensive, visionary plan that ensures that all of our State's children receive high quality care that readies them for kindergarten and builds on the success of paid family leave to position New York State as the best place in our nation to raise a family.

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