



**TESTIMONY TO THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING ON FY 2024-2025  
EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL ON HUMAN SERVICES  
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Thank you to Senator Krueger, Assemblymember Weinstein, Senator Brisport, Assemblymember Hevesi, Senator Persaud, and Assemblymember Rosenthal, and to the other members of the Finance, Ways and Means, Children and Families, and Social Services Committees for the opportunity to present testimony to you today regarding the Executive Budget Proposal.

The New York State Network for Youth Success is a non-profit organization with the goal to transform afterschool and summer learning across New York. We envision New York as a place where all K-12 youth have access to high-quality learning experiences beyond the traditional school day that prepare them for success in school, college, careers, and life. The programs we represent impact thousands of youth across the state. Afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs inspire students to learn, keep kids safe, and give parents and caregivers peace of mind. In essence, afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs are integral to our education, child care, and youth development systems.

These programs provide more time for deeper learning, creative spaces for hands-on projects, and opportunities to explore careers. Through their expertise, resources, and relationships, community-based afterschool programs help to strengthen the infrastructure for integrated support in schools, including the incorporation of high-quality informal instructional programming, project-based learning, and social emotional support.

Expanded learning opportunities also help working families balance work and life, enabling caregivers to stay focused at work while knowing that their young ones are cared for. The approximately 2,700 school-age child care programs providing before school, afterschool, summer, and other expanded learning supports help to ensure the necessary continuum-of-care for New York's children under 13 years old.

Afterschool, summer, and other expanded learning programs also offer a preventative strategy that promotes positive youth development. In afterschool, children and youth are surrounded by caring adults and mentors that help create a safe space for participants to express themselves, develop a sense of belonging, and discover their passions, while fostering an environment that supports healthy development. Afterschool programs are a critical component of the infrastructure in place that promotes the positive experiences, environment, and relationships that ensures positive youth development for young people.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> McDowell Group: McDowell Group. 2018.. Protective Factors for Youth Substance Abuse and Delinquency: The Role of Afterschool Programs. Retrieved from <https://www.mcdowellgroup.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/act-protective-factors-and-afterschool-programs-1-30-2018-final.pdf>

Given the diverse ways expanded learning opportunities impact youth, families, and communities, it is unsurprising that an overwhelming majority of New York parents and caregivers are satisfied with their child's afterschool program (94%) and summer program (95%) experience.<sup>2</sup>

### **FY 24-25 AFTERSCHOOL BUDGET PRIORITIES**

The Executive Budget proposal is a positive affirmation to what afterschool advocates have been fighting for years – better per student rates; aligned grant requirements; timely execution of contracts; and simplified reimbursement processes to maximize grant funding. As this is a promising step, we know that much more needs to be done to strengthen our afterschool system, especially amid workforce challenges and the threat of inflation affecting operational costs and capacity to serve students. This year's budget must elevate afterschool priorities that would help correct years of infrastructural fragility, while seizing the pivotal opportunity to set New York on a path to true transformation that will guarantee universal afterschool access. We therefore urge the Legislature to build on the Executive Budget in the following ways:

**Invest an additional \$119 million towards a new and improved afterschool program grant to ensure program viability and sustain current student capacity.** We deeply appreciate the additional investment that will provide an extra \$12.7 million, as compared to last year's funding, towards afterschool programs and its technical assistance in New York, as well as the Governor's proposal to standardize funding and eligibility through a combination and reimagining of the Advantage and Empire State After-School Programs. To truly improve access to afterschool programs however, additional funding is needed to 1) ensure program viability, i.e. ability for afterschool grantees to successfully complete the contract term while maximizing programming funding, an outcome boosted through significantly improved rates and grant conditions; and 2) maintain current student capacity, i.e. New York can offer at least the same, not decreased, student capacity Advantage and Empire programs offered. Thus, a historical investment of \$219 million total will ensure that program grants are offering at least the base, true cost, per student rate of \$4,300, while maintaining current student capacity. This base true cost would help buoy programs' ability to recruit and retain staff, as majority of grant funds have been found to go towards staff salary and compensation.

**Dedicate line-item funding of \$5 million towards school-age child care quality support through the NYS Network for Youth Success.** The Governor's inclusion of technical assistance is a reinforcement for this support for afterschool programs statewide: Specialized and tailored support allows afterschool providers to create and sustain conditions that help them maximize outcomes. Hence, this type of technical assistance must be available to a wider field of afterschool programs, not limited to programs funded under one funding stream as the Executive Budget seems to propose.

We strongly believe that New York can and should establish a school-age quality set-aside to support technical assistance for afterschool programs, as was precedent in the Child Care Development Block

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid. The Afterschool Alliance. *Afterschool After 3PM, Summer 2020*.  
<http://afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/data/geo/New%20York/summer>

Grant (CCDBG) before its reauthorization in 2014. Moreover, for every ten New York families receiving child care subsidies, about half goes to providing care for their school-age child[ren] who are from 5 to 12 years. It is therefore necessary that there is funding dedicated to provide quality support for the programs that serve school-age children.

As the previous partner that was tasked to provide technical assistance support then when school-age quality set aside was mandated, NYS Network for Youth Success is already positioned (and doing the work) to meet the critical needs identified by the afterschool field to a) deliver professional development opportunities, b) provide quality supports, and c) strengthen the capacity of afterschool programs. The NYS Network for Youth Success – the statewide afterschool network in New York – is the only organization that coordinates statewide expertise, resources, and technical assistance specifically focused on school-age child care programs and other afterschool programs.

This is why we urge the Legislature to direct a line-item funding through CCDBG to NYS Network for Youth Success: A \$5 million allocation would be modest, given the steady increase in CCDBG funding in the last few years (Discretionary funding allocated to New York increased by \$82 million alone in 2023.).

**Allow high-quality child care providers with statewide accreditation to qualify for increased differential payment rates.** The Executive Budget proposes to create an increased differential payment rate for high-quality child care providers who are: accredited by nationally recognized organizations; participate in the New York’s Quality Rating and Improvement system; or have completed training and are an active participant in the OCFS Non-patient Epinephrine Auto-injector Initiative, but fails to include accreditation by a statewide recognized organization. New York’s afterschool program accreditation, which is informed by the New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation workgroup and provided by the NYS Network for Youth Success, offers a robust accreditation model that is viable, affordable, and meaningful for afterschool providers and should be recognized by the State in efforts to promote high-quality afterschool programs throughout New York.

**Provide an additional \$3 million through CCDBG professional development allocation to expand the Educational Incentive Program (EIP).** The Educational Incentive Program (EIP) provides scholarships for credentialing activities, college credit-bearing coursework, and non-credit bearing training to help child care workers, including afterschool staff, develop professionally. Currently, the State provides up to \$17.4 million for “services and expenses of child care scholarships, education and ongoing professional development.” This allocation has not increased to accommodate the current demand and need for accessing more professional development opportunities.

We know that the reorganization of our afterschool funding to meet demand falls short without full-scale consideration of the supply, i.e. the workforce behind it. For many afterschool providers today, staff shortages remain a top concern. Afterschool programs continue to face daunting and well-documented challenges in recruiting, hiring, and retaining staff, and this was true even before the pandemic. Challenges include low wages, lack of child care for staff, and lack of advancement opportunities. Sustained efforts toward competitive compensation and benefits to adequately support the afterschool workforce do not only help promote job quality (positive and productive work environment) and stability

needed to ensure high quality programs, but also help to reinforce this important work afterschool professionals do as a viable, sustainable, and rewarding career path.

This is why we join the Empire State Campaign for Child Care in the call to provide a sustained increase in compensation for New York’s child care workforce by creating a permanent state fund to provide compensation supplements for all members of the child care workforce who work in licensed, regulated programs; and increasing rates for legally-exempt child care providers as a means of raising compensation for these providers.

Also, in collaboration with the Association of New York State Youth Bureaus, New York State Community Schools Network, Campaign for Summer Jobs, and Winning Beginning NY, the Network supports the following budget asks:

**Community Schools:** Provide \$100 million in dedicated funding to Community Schools; and maintain proposed \$250M in Community Schools Set-Aside and minimum allocation of \$100K.

**Youth Development Program (YDP):** Invest \$6M to bring funding back to FY2011 level at \$20.6M.

**Summer Youth Employment Program:** Maintain proposed \$50M.

Thank you for your time.

#### **ADDENDUM.**

#### **School-age child care quality support through the NYS Network for Youth Success**

In the last few years, New York has taken significant steps to expand support for working families/caregivers caring for their children, and invest in licensed and/or regulated child care programs and their staff. Notably, these current efforts acknowledged the needs of families with school-age children and those of the providers that care for them, something which is helping to shift away from the long, overlooked years of under-resourced support for school-age child care.

**One area currently under-resourced is school-age child care technical assistance (TA) and quality supports.** In New York, 46 of every 100 child care subsidies received are for school-age child[ren] between 5-12 years old. Unlike for early care – where New York makes available at least 3%<sup>3</sup> of the state’s CCDF discretionary funds (approximately \$10.7 million in 2023) for infants and toddlers – there is currently no dedicated funding for school-age care quality support. The FY2024-25 state budget provides an unprecedented opportunity to establish and invest in technical assistance and quality support for afterschool programs. The FY2024-25 afterschool budget priorities call for the State to **dedicate \$5 million of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds towards school-age child care quality support through the NYS Network for Youth Success.**

This addendum outlines various ways in which the New York State Network for Youth Success (NYSNYS or “the Network”) is helping to transform the afterschool system through current supports and how they can further do so through \$5 million in dedicated SACC TA funding provided by the state.

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<sup>3</sup> States and territories must meet a 9% quality spending requirement and a 3% infant and toddler quality spending requirement for CCDF discretionary funds. There is no mandated quality set-aside for school-age child care, and as a result, New York does not dedicate funds towards this currently.

*Note. School-age child care (SACC) programs are a critical part of the child care system in New York, operating “before and/or after school, during school lunch periods, on school holidays, and/or during summer vacations”<sup>4</sup>. Thus, a majority of state-funded afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs – are recognized as school-age child care programs. However, not all afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs are SACC programs.*

**Available but limited state support for school-age child care providers.** New York currently provides some critical services that are open to school-age child care programs. Despite availability, many of the services and initiatives outlined below are not built with school-age care in mind, an unfortunate oversight that contributes to the underestimation of different quality standards, regulations, infrastructure, and resources that are unique to these programs. This is why NYSNYS work is so valuable to the school-age child care system and other grant-funded afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs.

### CURRENT STATE SUPPORTS

- The Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) offers free online training on several topics eligible for OCFS training credit hours. The available training provides introductory concepts, which SACC programs can build upon through an expansive and robust training portfolio offered by the Network.
- The 35 Child Care Resource & Referral agencies (CCR&Rs) in New York help families find child care and also assist child care providers – often early childhood – with resources.
- QUALITYstarsNY, New York’s Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), provides support and resources to improve and sustain high quality for early childhood programs. QUALITYstarsNY is currently not available to school-age child care programs (See note below on piloting QUALITYstarsNY for SACC programs).
- The ASPIRE registry provides an online professional portfolio for child care professionals to highlight their educational progress (document their skills, experience, and knowledge), find and track professional development, and highlight their career pathways. QUALITY StarsNY programs are mandated to use this system, thus ASPIRE is more extensively used by early childhood programs as compared to SACC programs.
- The Educational Incentive Program provides scholarships to help child care professionals pay for training and educational activities with the intent to build provider knowledge, skills, and competencies in order to improve child care quality. This support is available to both the early childhood and the school-age child care workforce.

**What is the Network?** The New York State Network for Youth Success (NYSNYS or “the Network”) is dedicated to building a youth-serving system that increases the quality and availability of afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs, and supports all programs that promote young people’s intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development outside the traditional classroom.

The Network is the:

<sup>4</sup> Learn more from OCFS Policy Statement about what constitutes a school-age child care program: <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/policies/Childcare-Policy-16-1-What-Constitutes-School-Age-Child-Care-Program.pdf>.

- statewide afterschool network in New York working with 49 other state afterschool networks and the national Afterschool Alliance
- state affiliate for the National AfterSchool Association
- New York State lead for the National Girls Collaborative Project
- backbone agency for the New York State Community Schools Network
- state advisor to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, the only direct federal source of funding for afterschool

The Network is also recognized as a critical partner on plan development, stakeholder feedback, dissemination of resources, and providing technical assistance and staff training in New York's state Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) plan.

As the only organization in New York that coordinates statewide expertise, resources, and technical assistance (TA) specifically focused on school-age child care (SACC) and other grant-funded afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs, the Network is already positioned to meet critical needs to a) provide professional development opportunities, b) provide quality supports, and c) strengthen the capacity of these programs.

## NEW YORK STATE NETWORK FOR YOUTH SUCCESS SUPPORTS

<b>TA/Capacity Building Area</b>	<b>NYSNYS TA and capacity building supports for afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs</b> <i>As the statewide afterschool network with deep reach in the afterschool community, NYSNYS provides expansive support to the afterschool field in the following ways:</i>	<b>Additional supports provided through NYSNYS with a \$5M line-item funding towards afterschool TA and quality care support</b> <i>This funding would help sustain and strengthen NYSNYS TA and capacity building supports outlined PLUS the following:</i>
<b>Providing professional development opportunities to afterschool staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Serves as the credentialing agency for the School-Age Care Credential offered in-person and also through Distance Learning (asynchronous) courses and virtual-live trainings online</li> <li>- Offers full professional development (PD) catalog<sup>5</sup> based on the needs raised by the field including the Site Leader Institute, Coaching Circles, and free Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) trainings<sup>6</sup></li> <li>- Hosts the annual statewide afterschool conference, School’s Out, Make it Count, offering high-quality PD sessions (eligible for OCFS credit hours) for afterschool professionals through the two-day conference</li> <li>- Hosts the 21st Century Community Learning Center<sup>7</sup> Conference and the NYS Community Schools Resilience and Equity Conference<sup>8</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hire additional staff to provide afterschool PD trainings throughout the state</li> <li>- Provide additional training and resources on relevant topics such as mental health and social- emotional learning</li> <li>- Provide additional training and resources to improve early literacy outcomes and STEM opportunities for youth through expanded learning opportunities</li> <li>- Provide high quality asynchronous classes for OCFS approved training hours per regulations and policy statement (also known as “OCFS training credit hours)</li> <li>- Continue offering free JEDI and sustainability trainings</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> The Network has 3 Training and Technical Assistance Professional- Professional Development Specialist TTAP-PDS credentialed staff and two TTAP-Coach on staff, and work with a cohort of others with these credentials around the state to offer high-quality opportunities.

<sup>6</sup> **Site Leader Institute** exposes new directors to the knowledge base and skill set of effective afterschool supervision and management. **Coaching Circles** bring providers together to collaborate and solve the issues they face in their programs with a sustainable design. **Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) trainings** offered about 20 free training sessions featuring topics at the core of JEDI, including racism and bias; supporting LGBTQIA2S (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual and/or agender, two-spirit) youth and families; Native American cultural competency; ageism and youth empowerment; antisemitism; and xenophobia.

<sup>7</sup> 21st CCLC program provides the only federal source of funding for afterschool. The conference convenes 21st CCLC subgrantees from New York and provides professional development opportunities.

<sup>8</sup> The NYS Network for Youth Success serves as the backbone agency of the NYS Community Schools Network.

<p><b>Providing support to improve program quality</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leads the New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation, providing afterschool programs with performance indicators and quality benchmarks to guide program planning, implementation and evaluation</li> <li>- Serves as the lead collaborator in school-age child care programs pilot of QUALITYstarsNY</li> <li>- Developed and owns the <a href="#">Quality Self-Assessment (QSA) Tool</a>, a free, accessible tool for programs to self-assess across 11 elements of quality, reviewing best-practices from administration and sustainability to programming and family engagement, and create and implement improvement plans supported by aligned resources. The QSA Tool is <b>available in 11 languages</b> and is <b>recommended for use for all state and federally funding programs in New York</b></li> <li>- Provides live assistance to individuals and organizations looking to start new programs</li> <li>- Provides technical assistance around School-Age Child Care regulations and programming (contracts and grants supports)</li> <li>-Assists CCR&amp;Rs with addressing SACC issues and providing SACC supports</li> <li>- Leads New York State’s team for multiple peer learning communities run by the National Center of Afterschool and Summer Enrichment (NCASE) to help advance efforts around workforce, social-emotional learning, quality systems, and mental health supports for afterschool</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expand the NYS Afterschool Program Accreditation</li> <li>- Support efforts to expand QUALITYstarsNY to school-age child care programs statewide</li> <li>- Increase staff capacity to expand access to SAC credential</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Strengthening capacity of the afterschool field</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developed and manages AfterschoolPathfinder.org, a free, statewide job posting site designed exclusively for the afterschool field</li> <li>- Leads efforts to promote school-community partnerships to accelerate students' success</li> <li>- Connects the afterschool field to national experts, best-practices, and resources through frequent newsletters, listservs, and social media postings</li> <li>- Convenes local partners (school districts, funders, city/county leadership, colleges/universities, local providers, etc.) for PD, capacity building, and networking opportunities with support of our 15 regional afterschool networks across the state</li> <li>- Acts as a connector across New York State for the Early Care and Learning Council (ECLC) and the Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCR&amp;Rs)</li> <li>-Created a system of credentialed professionals, including endorsers, trainers, and advisors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hire additional full-time staff at the Network to expand capacity building support throughout the state</li> <li>- Build staff capacity within the 15 regional afterschool networks to sustain capacity-building efforts at the local level</li> <li>- Sustain and expand AfterschoolPathfinder.org</li> </ul>
<p><b>Supporting sustainability efforts of the state's afterschool programs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Works with school districts to promote school-community partnerships and investments in afterschool programs, including the development of school-community partnership guidebook</li> <li>- Offers sustainability workshops and coaching offered to schools and community-based organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sustain current regional networks' capacity and increase regional networks across New York. Regional networks provide a critical structure to help sustain programs through pooling resources to streamline, share, and maximize program services.</li> <li>- Provide additional sustainability workshops and coaching offered to schools and community-based organizations.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Improving overall afterschool infrastructure</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Serves as a liaison between existing afterschool providers and administering/regulatory state agencies to promote seamless communication, collaboration, and improvement</li> <li>- Facilitates updates to afterschool data on the Kids Well-being Indicator Clearinghouse (KWIC) Maps</li> <li>- Mobilizes the afterschool community to solicit and gather feedback, recommendations, questions, and comments regarding regulations and policies affecting the afterschool</li> <li>- Facilitates the Public Funding Taskforce, which helps advise the Network and its partners on needs of the afterschool, summer, and expanded learning field related to: public funding RFPs, grant implementation, data collection on grant activities, and other grant-related needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate a landscape analysis of afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs in New York, which is currently lacking</li> <li>- Facilitate the expansion and use of a coordinated data system for afterschool grants</li> <li>- Sustain updates to afterschool data to the Kids Well-being Indicator Clearinghouse (KWIC) Maps</li> <li>- Expand skill building <a href="#">initiatives</a> and frameworks that promote positive youth development</li> <li>- Host an annual summit to convene afterschool stakeholders and state agency leaders to facilitate efforts toward a strong, aligned, and coordinated afterschool system</li> <li>- Increase internal capacity (staff) for NYSNYS to establish a TA center to coordinate technical assistance</li> </ul>
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