



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

# **Erie County Families Not Getting Their Fair Share - Kennedy Calls for Same Child Care Accessibility Offered in Rochester and Albany**

Timothy M. Kennedy

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### *Threshold to Qualify for Subsidies Would Rise, Providing Much Needed Relief For Families*

### *With Help, Parents Would No Longer Have to Make Choice Between Job and Child Care*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy (D-Buffalo) today announced a push for money in this year’s budget to be allocated for child care subsidies for families in Erie County with incomes of up to 275% of the federal poverty level. Currently, these subsidies are only provided to families within the county with incomes of up to 200% by the Department of Social Services. In a letter to Governor Cuomo, Kennedy asked for the state to set aside \$2.5 million in the budget in order to expand its subsidy program into Erie County.

These child care subsidies are already provided to families with incomes of up to 275% in Albany, Rensselaer, Schenectady, Saratoga, Oneida and Monroe Counties through the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. In his letter, Kennedy asked that the funding be allocated in the Governor’s 30-day budget amendments. If granted, this funding would help additionally serve at least 300 children in Erie County, and it would grant families equal opportunities and aid that is already being offered to other parents across New York State.

"Parents in Erie County are working just as hard to raise families as others across the state, and yet they're not being given the same opportunity to receive child care help," said Senator Tim Kennedy. "With annual child care costs for two children exceeding \$25,000 in Erie County, many parents earn too much to qualify for assistance, but not nearly enough to afford regular childcare. Many are faced with a difficult decision to reduce their workload, refuse a promotion or leave a job altogether. By setting aside this funding in the budget, the Governor and the State is sending a clear message that working families are a priority in every county statewide, and that achieving the American Dream is in fact attainable."

"Affordability is the number one barrier to child care in Erie County, where costs can be as high as \$13,000 per year for just one child. Yet our subsidy rate is lower than in other New York communities with comparable child care rates, putting Erie County families at a clear disadvantage," said CEO of Child Care Resource Network Lynn Pullano. "Nearly 100,000 children in the county have parents who are employed, so increasing subsidy funding is an opportunity to benefit a wide range of families and help sustain our community's workforce. It's a potential win for everyone, because more than \$2.05 in local economic activity is generated for every \$1.00 spent on child care."

If funding is granted, Kennedy is requesting that the subsidies be administered by the Workforce Development Institute (WDI), a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization that provides affordable, accessible and quality child care through its Child Care Enrollment Program. Labor and community leaders agree that increase in funds would not only help families, but that the local economy would also benefit from more parents enrolling their children in care programs.

"Subsidizing the cost of child care for ordinary workers in Western New York would be an important act on the part of the Governor and the State Legislature," said Dick Lipsitz, President of the Western New York Area Labor Federation. "In particular, it would aid women in the workforce, but also contribute to greater economic stability for many families as a whole."

"As the President said in the State of the Union address, we must stop regarding child care as only a women's issue. Affordable, high quality child care is an investment in our community's economic development and, in fact, is imperative for reaching the full potential of all our industries," said Deborah Merrifield, Executive Director of Family Help Center.

“Expanding the availability of the child care subsidy for more Erie County families removes a significant barrier to economic advancement for working families throughout Erie County,” said Brenda W. McDuffie, President & CEO of the Buffalo Urban League. “Parents should not have to choose between pursuing employment opportunities and the health and safety of their children, and I applaud Sen. Kennedy’s efforts to eliminate this challenge for hundreds of households in our community.”

A copy of Sen. Kennedy’s letter to Governor Cuomo in its entirety is attached.

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*Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate’s 63rd District, which is comprised of the towns of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.*