

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY
SENATOR, 63RD DISTRICT

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January 27, 2015

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Thank you for your commitment to working families across New York State with unveiling of your 2015 Opportunity Agenda earlier this week. The proposals you highlighted address some of the most important problems faced by our community and our state, including raising the minimum wage to lift families out of poverty, and providing young people with the assistance they need to free them from crippling student loan payments as they begin their careers. While these policies will have a tremendous impact on middle class New Yorkers, I write today on the related issue of child care subsidies for Western New York's working families.

As our community continues to experience an economic rebirth, thanks in large part to your tremendous commitment to Buffalo and Western New York, it is imperative that working men and women have access to quality, affordable child care. As you prepare your 30-day amendments to the 2015-16 Executive Budget, I am respectfully requesting a \$2.5 million new appropriation for Erie County under the New York State AFL-CIO Workforce Development Institute's (WDI) Child Care Facilitated Enrollment Program.

In 2006, WDI was authorized by the New York State Legislature to create a pilot program in the Capital Region and in Oneida County to provide child care subsidies to working families with incomes up to 275% of the federal poverty level. Since then, the highly-successful program has expanded into Monroe County and has assisted children in attending day care, after-school, and summer camp programs. If this appropriation is approved for Erie County, the program would help serve an additional 300 children. The expansion of WDI's Child Care Facilitated Enrollment Program would bring the funding total for all counties from \$3,823,000 to \$6,323,000. This relatively small investment would have a large impact on hundreds of families in Western New York.

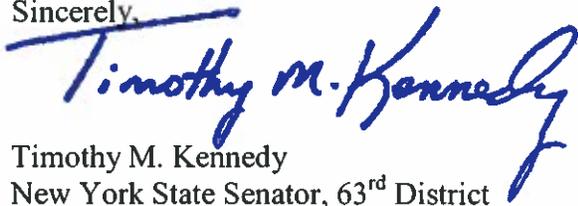
Currently, child care subsidies are provided by the Erie County Department of Social Services for working families with incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty level. With annual child care costs for two children exceeding \$25,000 in Erie County, many parents earn too much to

qualify for assistance but not nearly enough to afford regular child care. Too often, parents are forced to make the difficult decision to reduce their work hours, refuse a promotion, or leave the workforce altogether. By providing an additional funding source for child care subsidies with a significantly higher income limit, New York State can help ease the squeeze on the working class in Erie County.

Not only do child care subsidies benefit working families, they are also a boon to businesses. On average, a working parent misses between five and nine working days per year due to child care issues, resulting in a significant loss of productivity and revenue. Increasing access to affordable, quality child care will reduce absenteeism and increase retention of valuable employees who would otherwise have to leave the workforce.

For these reasons, I urge you to include \$2.5 million appropriation to expand the Workforce Development Institute's Child Care Facilitated Enrollment Program to Erie County as you prepare your 30-day amendments to the 2015-16 Executive Budget. I look forward to working together to ensure that hardworking parents can participate in Western New York's economic renewal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Timothy M. Kennedy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Timothy M. Kennedy
New York State Senator, 63rd District