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**Testimony Submitted by Steven Morales, NY Policy Director, All Our Kin
FY24 Joint Legislative Hearing on Human Services
New York State Legislature
February 13, 2023**

Honorable Senators and Members of the Assembly:

My name is Steven Morales and I'm the New York Policy Director at All Our Kin. All Our Kin is a national nonprofit organization that trains, supports, and sustains home-based family child care educators in New York City. Most of the educators we serve are located in the Bronx, where we work with nearly 300 family child care educators with the capacity to care for over 4,000 children. We are also proud Steering Committee members of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care.

Family child care is a critical part of New York's child care infrastructure. Many parents choose family child care because of its unique ability to offer flexible hours and mixed age, culturally responsive care in a family's home language. In New York State, 71 percent of licensed child care programs are family or group family child care; family child care programs have the capacity to care for over 139,000 children; and 40 percent of children in publicly funded care are cared for in family child care programs. Despite the demand for family child care and center based care across the state, our child care system remains in crisis.

According to a recent analysis by The Children's Agenda, since the beginning of the pandemic, New York State has experienced a net loss of over 1,300 child care programs which translates to over 10,000 lost child care slots. That's 1,300 businesses shuttered, thousands of jobs lost, and 10,000 families who had care prior to the pandemic that no longer have a trusted place to bring their children while they work or attend school. And these closures have disproportionately impacted home-based family child care businesses who play a vital role across our state, especially in rural and urban, working-class communities.

At the core of the child care crisis lies one simple fact: compensation for child care providers is not nearly enough to raise a family. On average, child care educators in New York are in the bottom 4 percent of all earners. This means that 96% of professionals earn higher wages than the people who are caring for and educating our youngest children every day, and according to recent testimony by The New School, family child care providers often work more hours and earn less than the average child care worker. This reality is ongoing – in a December survey by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, one third of family child care providers in New York expressed that they are considering leaving their jobs and closing their programs due to low compensation.

For our children's futures and the future of working families in our state, we must stabilize and expand our child care supply and ensure that all families who need child care are able to access it. To do so, **New York State must invest in the child care workforce in the short and long-term.** All Our Kin calls for the following key investments:



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1. In the short term, a **Child Care Workforce Compensation Fund of \$1 billion**. We consistently hear from child care providers that stabilization grants have temporarily helped them keep their businesses afloat. But when those temporary payments stopped, providers found themselves back at square one wondering how they would pay their bills. The \$389 million for child care stabilization in the Executive Budget is a good start, but not enough to keep educators from leaving the field for higher paying jobs in other sectors. All Our Kin asks you to build on the Governor's proposal by increasing the amount to \$1 billion in FY24. This amount is necessary to provide all child care workers with a compensation supplement that would make their pay more competitive with other fields, help retain educators, get our child care programs operating back at pre-pandemic capacity, and ensure parents can get back to work.
2. **A long term commitment to a new child care compensation model by 2025** that pays child care providers based on what it truly costs to provide care. A recent [study commissioned by EdTrustNY](#) shows that our current state child care subsidy system pays educators thousands of dollars less than it actually costs to run a child care program. A long-term commitment to a shift in payment model is necessary so that educators can earn competitive wages and benefits that sustain their businesses and allow them to continue serving our state's children for the long term. Washington D.C. and several other states have enacted or are in the process of enacting this model to keep their child care systems from lurching from one funding crisis to the next. New York should lead the way as the first big state to commit to long-term investment in the child care workforce.

In addition to the child care workforce, we know that there are still thousands of families across the state who cannot access child care subsidies. We support the Governor's proposals to increase eligibility for child care assistance, reduce co-payments for families, and streamline application systems and processes. We call on the State to continue reducing, and to eventually eliminate, the barriers that stand in the way of families' access to care. This includes **investing \$60 million in care for undocumented children** who are currently unable to receive child care assistance in our state. No child should be barred from a high-quality child care experience. New York can and must continue to work toward a system where every family is able to receive the care they need, when they need it, in the setting of their choice.

In closing, despite the work of last year's budget, the child care crisis in New York State is far from over. Providers in centers and family child care programs alike are still struggling to keep their doors open. We urge you to seize the opportunity to invest in child care to meet the needs of our youngest children, allow parents to remain in the workforce, and make New York State the best place in the country to raise a family.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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