August 4, 2020

Honorable Andrew Cuomo, Governor
Executive Chamber
NYS Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

We know that childcare programs in New York State have always played a pivotal role in the communities’ economy as well as provide safe and wholesome environments for children. In order for New Yorkers to get back to work and repair an economy that has been battered by the COVID-19 pandemic, New York State must invest in our childcare communities.

As New York struggled through the first months of the pandemic, our essential workers relied on New York’s childcare providers to enable them to go to work. Our childcare providers answered that call, proving that they are themselves essential workers, and did so despite great personal risk. They sacrificed for all New Yorkers.

We also know that a stable and accessible childcare industry is a prerequisite for more parents to return to work. In fact, New York State’s economic recovery is reliant on the success of this particular industry.

Therefore, we do not understand why New York State government has been holding back tens of millions of dollars, allocated by the federal government for the childcare industry through the CARES act, at a time when 25% of childcare programs and 30% of school-aged child care centers have closed due to the pandemic. The remaining childcare providers are now losing money because of reduced capacity due to social distancing and other important health requirements and many more will be forced to close as well, making the states’ decision to withhold funds even more perplexing.

In addition, the majority of New York’s 15,512 licensed or registered childcare businesses are owned and/or run by Black and Brown women—the same population that has been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. To keep these businesses solvent, New York State needs to restore and sustain capacity by using the funds it already has on hand.

We are therefore writing not only to express our concern over New York’s decision to withhold vast sums of money from the childcare industry, but to offer suggestions for the state to support providers and bolster New York’s reopening.

We first urge the state to immediately compensate Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) agencies for regular contracts which have not yet been paid. The livelihoods of these essential providers - who are crucial to our recovery - are put at increased risk with each day of nonpayment.

Secondly, we suggest that remaining funds from the CARES Act child care appropriations - $69 million of which has not yet been allocated, and at least $10 million which remains from the Essential Worker Scholarship program - plus any remaining CCDBG and TANF funding, be used to
support programs that will be reopening, as well as supporting those programs that risked everything to stay open over the last 129 days.

Simply put, our childcare providers can no longer operate on their own. They need our help, and we must show our full support. Specific details on our proposals for the CARES Act appropriations are in the document attached with this letter.

Thank you for your attention and for your ongoing leadership during the pandemic. We look forward to working together to support the childcare industry, our economic recovery from the pandemic, and all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

Velmanette Montgomery, Chair
Senate Committee on Children & Families  
Ellen Jaffee, Chair  
Assembly Committee on Children & Families

Roxanne Persaud, Chair  
Senate Committee on Social Services

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Assembly Committee on Social Services

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Prevent Child Abuse New York
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc.
Citizens’ Committee for Children
United Neighborhood Houses
Child Care Resource Network
Coalition for Homeless Youth
Alliance of New York State YMCAs
Alliance for Quality Education
Barrier Free Living
Bronx House
Catholic Charities of Chemung & Schuyler Counties
Catholic Family Center of Rochester
Center for Children’s Initiatives
Citizen Action of New York
Committee for Hispanic Children and Families
Community Housing Innovations
Comunilife, Inc.
Cypress Hills Child Care Corporation
Day Care Council of New York
East Side House Settlement
Empire Justice Center
FPWA
Greater Syracuse Tenants Network
Goddard Riverside Community Center
Henry Street Settlement
Homeless Alliance of Western New York
Homeless Services United
Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness & Housing
Legal Services Staff Association, NOLSW, UAW 2320
Mental Health Association in Orange County, Inc.
New York Association for the Education of Young Children
NYC Child Care Resource and Referral Consortium
Program Design and Development
Queens Community House
Resource Center for Accessible Living
Rochester's Cornerstone Group
Southern Tier Independence Center
Tenants Political Action Committee
Trinity Alliance, Inc.
United Auto Workers Region 9A
United Community Centers
Unity House of Troy, Inc.
YWCA- Binghamton and Broome County