



early care &
Learning COUNCIL

New York's child care resource network

**Joint Legislative Public Hearing on
2013-2014 Executive Budget Proposal:
Economic Development**

Submitted by
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Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and input on Governor Cuomo's proposed budget for New York State. The Early Care & Learning Council is a statewide, not-for-profit organization, whose mission is to promote excellence in early care and education with equal access for all families. We do this primarily through the support of, and in partnership with, a strong network of community-based organizations that provide Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) services.

Across New York State, community revitalization is closely linked to economic development strategies that boost employment, housing, arts, entertainment and education. Increasingly, business and economic development leaders have recognized that a viable quality child care infrastructure improves the quality of life in a community and makes these areas more vital places to live and work. Ensuring that we have high quality early childhood programs for our business community is a key area of an economic development plan. Questions asked by those looking to relocate or expand are related to ensuring that systems are in place for early care and education.

Research tells us that the foundation for success in school and in life is developed well before a child enters kindergarten. In fact, a child's earliest experiences are responsible for wiring the brain for future use. Long term educational achievement is uniformly linked to participation in high quality early care and education.

Quality child care has both long-term and short-term returns.

- Short-term—it allows nearly 70 percent of our local workforce to go to work each day. Their productivity on the job keeps our businesses running and enables residents to buy homes and pay taxes to support our growing community.
- Long-term—participants are 40% less likely to be referred to special education services or held back a grade, 30% more likely to graduate from high school and twice as likely to attend college.¹

Many individuals overlook the fact that if the early care and education sector did not exist, there would be many parents who could not show up for work each day, as well as employers unable to operate or expand their businesses. Reliable, regulated, quality child care has been shown to increase employee attendance, punctuality and productivity. A study by the American Business

¹ Strategies for Children. (2012) *The Path to a Competitive Workforce Begins with High-Quality Early Education*. Retrieved from http://www.strategiesforchildren.org/eea/6research_summaries/13_HQEE_PathToCompetitiveWorkforce.pdf

Collaboration reported that 63% of the employees surveyed reported improved productivity associated with quality dependent care. Reliable, high-quality early education and care arrangements reduce employee turnover and lower absenteeism. Employee absenteeism due to a breakdown in child care cost American businesses \$3 billion per year.²

The long-term impacts of a quality child care system are even more impressive and should be of interest to business leaders. Nobel laureate economist James Heckman states that “investing early allows us to shape the future; investing later chains us to fixing the missed opportunities of the past.”

A commitment to building a quality early childhood helps to build a better economic future. According to Dr. Jack Shonkoff, director of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, a baby forms 700 new neural connections per second in the first years of life. In addition, overwhelming research from top universities and institutions tells us that 85% of intellect, personality and social skills develop before age five.

With brain architecture research so compelling, developing our future workforce begins early. Yet, significant public investment doesn’t begin until a child is in school - after important social and emotional skills have already formed. The foundational skills required to grow a team-capable, job-ready workforce are built in the earliest years of life - between birth and age 5. The play-based curriculum of high-quality early education lays a strong foundation for STEM learning by building on young children’s exploration of the world around them as natural scientists and mathematicians.³

Child Care Resource and Referral agencies have the capacity to bring child care information and support to the work place and to assist directly with employers. Parents can utilize our comprehensive services so they quickly obtain reliable child care that meets their needs and the requirements of their employers. We know where regulated child care exists and where additional capacity has to be developed to support emerging or growing businesses or respond to changes in employer needs.

Quality child care IS good for business: the research and experience of many Fortune 500 companies shows that helping employees to balance their family and work roles by making child care

² Shellenback, K. (2004). Child Care and Parent Productivity: Making the Business Case. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Department of City and Regional Planning.

³ Gopnik, A. (2012). Scientific Thinking in Young Children: Theoretical Advances, Empirical Research and Policy Implications. *Science*. 337, 6102. Pp. 1623-1627.

available or supporting quality child care outside improves productivity, reduces absenteeism, cuts turnover and increases company value.

The Early Care & Learning Council is a member of *Winning Beginning NY*, the State's early care and development coalition. *Winning Beginning NY* believes that our State must preserve, protect, and increase access to high-quality early care and learning programs.

QUALITYstarsNY is New York's star rating and improvement system created to drive current and future state investments toward quality improvements in early learning programs, a strategic approach to ensuring both public and private dollars are used most effectively and efficiently to promote better outcomes for children. An investment of at least \$5 million is necessary to begin any form of statewide implementation of QUALITYstarsNY. This cost burden, as well as benefits, can be shared by multiple state agencies that are influential to the lives of our youngest citizens-our future workforce. It is an investment that will ensure the economic development of our state for years to come.

- High-quality early education helps develop children's social-emotional skills and self-regulation, as well as their ability to focus and stay on task, all prerequisites for success in the 21st century workplace. Children's ability at age 4 to pay attention and complete a task strongly predicts their chances of graduating from college by 25.⁴
- At age 40, adults who had participated in high-quality early education as children earned, on average, \$5,500 more per year. Three-quarters (76%) were employed, compared with 62% of non-participants.⁵

As the New York State government plans for the future, I hope it will think about including plans to support the development of a quality child care system and include support for both the short and long term successful economic future.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments to you.

⁴ Parker-Pope, T. (2012, August 23). Simon says don't use flashcards. The New York Times. Retrieved from <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/08/23/simon-says-dontuse-flashcards/>

⁵ Schweinhart, L. J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W. S., Belfield, C. R., & Nores, M. (2005). Lifetime effects: The HighScope Perry Preschool study through age 40.(Monographs of the HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 14). Ypsilanti, MI: HighScope Press.