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Day Care Council of New York

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New York State Joint Legislative Public Hearing on the 2016-17 Executive Budget Human Services Hearing – February 9, 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on an important sector impacting millions of New Yorkers. My name is Lisa Caswell and I am the Senior Policy Analyst for the Day Care Council of New York. We are the oldest and largest membership organization of early childhood education providers in New York City, dating back to World War II when thousands of women entered the workforce. We represent the interests of more than 100 non-profit organizations that operate more than 200 child care centers serving low income children from birth to four years old.

The Day Care Council of New York is also the lead organization for the state funded Child Care Resource and Referral system in the five boroughs of New York City through which thousands of parents find qualified early education services for their children. The CCR&R resources also support child care providers with assistance and training in order to deliver high quality childcare.

We are members of Winning Beginning NY, a statewide coalition of advocates working to expand access to quality early childhood education and related resources. With the recent federal reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant, the state FY 2017 state budget is in need of \$.90 million for health and safety requirements (\$28 million for background clearances; \$34 million for inspections; and \$28 million for training and professional development). There is also an additional need for \$100 million in funding to implement 12 month eligibility, child care for homeless children, and market rate increases to ensure that the same number of children continue to receive services. This level of funding is critical to the ongoing stability of the entire statewide system.

We strongly support equal access to child care services and recommend that parent copayments not exceed 7% of household income. We also encourage the state to set its payment rates at the 75th percentile of market rate in order to meet the true cost of quality early childhood education. Providers across the state are in desperate need of funding to be able to compensate and retain a qualified workforce. Many upstate providers are closing their doors because they cannot compete with other sectors who pay their workers more. To further research this critical issue, in the fall of 2015, the Winning Beginning NY Workforce Committee completed a statewide survey with responses from more than 2,200 early childhood education workers. We are currently analyzing the results with a report pending release this year. As you know, the vast majority of workers in this sector are women. We have long sought to bring attention to the significant inequities they face and will be making recommendations on matters of compensation and access to continuing education.

The Day Care Council is currently engaged in labor negotiations and is advocating strongly for wage increases for both teaching and support staff. While salaries have increased for Universal Pre-Kindergarten teachers, our members continue to lose staff who go to work for New York City's Department of Education as soon as they are state certified. We must address this issue on a statewide basis if we hope to maintain quality service delivery for our youngest New Yorkers.

As members of the Human Services Council, the Day Care Council supports the "\$15andFunding" campaign which is focused on making sure that the staff in nonprofit human service agencies across the state are not left out of the proposed increases to the minimum wage. This sector has sustained nearly \$1 billion in funding cuts since 2009 and has not been in receipt of nearly adequate cost of living adjustments for several years. We are committed to the provision of a true continuum of services for families in need of support. The state must allocate sufficient funding to stabilize this vital sector so that providers can continue to maintain operations through retention of qualified staff. We appreciate your attention to these, and other matters. Please feel free to call on us should you need any additional information.