

Testimony
2016 Joint Legislative Hearing
Human Services Committee
February 9, 2016

Thank you, members of the committee, for hearing our testimony today. *Winning Beginning NY* is the statewide early learning coalition. Our priorities include policies impacting children from the prenatal period through age eight.

We are heartened that recently there has been policymaker interest in coordinating a fragmented system and we applaud you for beginning to think about the whole child and the whole family. The funding we are requesting will mainly maintain existing services. However, we do urge you to consider increasing funding and, therefore, access to each of these high-quality programs.

New York State has recently taken on the issues of poverty and low-wage workers. The programs we are advocating for here today speak directly to both of those issues. We hope that you will do more than pay lip service—but instead will act by allocating appropriate funding. We thank you in advance for your commitment.

We urge you to:

Maintain \$27.3 million and invest an additional \$10.5 million in maternal, infant, and early childhood home visiting to adequately fund a continuum of supports and services for families.

Allocate at least \$90M for implementation of the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 so that no children lose their subsidy and there are no cuts to other human services programs.

- **\$24M-\$28M could be economic development funds so that the costs of background clearances for child care providers are not passed down to low-wage workers and small businesses.**

\$100 million to maintain slots in the face of market rate increases due in June of 2016.

And as New York implements other new federal CCDBG requirements, such as providing 12 months of eligibility regardless of changes in family income, paying for a reasonable number of child absences, and expanding eligibility to children who are homeless.

Increase Advantage After School funding by \$49.9 million and restore \$2 million from last year.

Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting

Voluntary home visiting provides education and support to new families, strengthening them by decreasing child maltreatment, increasing school readiness, and improving health outcomes. It is a proven poverty reduction strategy.

Currently, four research-based programs—Healthy Families New York (HFNY), Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), Parents as Teachers (PAT), and The Parent-Child Home Program, Inc. (PCHP)—operate in New York State, but only two (HFNY and NFP) receive any state funding. To make a true impact, we must invest in the continuum of services and supports available, which means investing adequately in all four.

Child Care

The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG), signed into law by President Obama last year, reauthorizes the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) through FY 2020 and contains health, safety, and quality initiatives. These regulations protect children and increase the safety and quality of New York's child care for working families and their children, but there is a cost. In particular, the federal law:

- *Requires that all licensed and legally-exempt providers submit to criminal background checks from the FBI, National Sex Offender Registry, state criminal and sex offender registry (in each state the applicant has resided in for the past five years), the child abuse and neglect registry (in each state the applicant has resided in for the past five years), and the National Crime Center.* This new requirement is a significant expansion on current law, as New York State currently only requires background checks for licensed providers. FBI fingerprinting checks are not currently required for providers in New York State. An additional 265,000 people will need to submit to background checks from New York State's sex offender registry alone, not including other checks now required. Nearly 12,500 small businesses (child care centers and family child care homes) and their employees will bear the financial burden.
- *Requires that New York State conduct annual, unannounced full inspections of all providers, including legally exempt providers.* Currently, only 20% of the 47,000 legally exempt providers who receive subsidies are inspected every year. Taking effect no later than November 19, 2016, the law also requires that the ratio of licensing inspectors must be maintained at sufficient levels to support regular inspections.
- *Imposes new professional development requirements for all child care providers.* The law requires a mandatory pre-service health and safety training for all child care staff, and ongoing, annual training and progression of professional development, which may include post-secondary education.

The vast majority of children in working families in New York who are eligible for childcare subsidies are going un-served due to insufficient funding. Current funding serves 130,000 children, 22% of those eligible for subsidies.¹ **Without an increase in the State's investment, parents' ability to provide financial stability for their family and a supportive learning environment for their children is being seriously undermined.** New York State was named the second least affordable

¹ More than one-third of New York's 58 Social Services Districts have lowered eligibility levels to below 200% of the federal poverty level (\$39,580 for a family of three), creating a desperate situation for many working families. For more on child care across the state, see <http://www.empirejustice.org/assets/pdf/publications/reports/still-mending-the-patchwork/still-mending-the-patchwork.pdf>

state for Center-Based Infant Care in 2014, with an average cost of high quality infant care at \$14,009 per year.²

Afterschool

This investment would:

- Restore Advantage After School to the peak number of participants (20,000) in 2007-08.
- Align per student funding with national best practice (\$1,500 per student).
- Provide summer programming for the same number of participants.
- Ensure quality by leveraging statewide knowledge, resources, and supports through technical assistance.
- Allow for data collection and evaluation to make evidence-based improvements and provide state-level data on afterschool and summer programming.

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² Child Care Aware. 2014 Child Care in the State of New York. http://www.naccrra.org/sites/default/files/new_york_fact_sheet.pdf

