



**Testimony of Jumpstart for Young Children
Standing Committee on Children and Families Public Hearing
Topic: The Child Care Crisis in New York State
January 26, 2023**

Jumpstart for Young Children respectfully submits the following testimony in support of increased protections for the Early Education and Care (EEC) Sector. Chair Brisport and members of the Senate Standing Committee on Children and Families, we are grateful for the opportunity to testify in support of the State's timely action to address challenges impacting the EEC sector in New York State.

I. Introduction

Jumpstart envisions a world in which every child has the opportunity to thrive. To achieve this vision, we advance equitable learning outcomes for young children in underserved communities by recruiting and supporting caring adults to deliver high-quality programming to children while driving systems change through teaching, advocacy, and leadership. Our organization has 30 years of experience serving over 157,000 children with the support of more than 62,500 college students and community volunteers seeking to create pathways into a more robust early education profession. With expertise partnering with higher education institutions, experience delivering a high-quality teacher training and early literacy curriculum, and the national reach necessary to implement culturally responsive programming that meets the needs of the diverse communities we serve, Jumpstart supports the transformative change required for the early education sector. We strive to uplift the voices of the aspiring early educators, children, families, and EEC providers we serve by advocating for policy solutions promoting equity, quality, and a flourishing early education community.

Jumpstart and our partners in the Campaign for Children and the Empire State Campaign for Child Care are encouraged by the State's momentum towards a more tangibly universal childcare system, including EEC's inclusion as one of several overarching priorities in Governor Hochul's [State of the State address](#). The following provisions and more motivate our belief in our States' positive momentum:

- A proposed step towards enrollment-based reimbursement for providers through extended absence allotments for reimbursement
- A proposed reduction in family co-pays to 1% of income over the FPL
- A proposal to adopt categorical income eligibility expediting enrollment for families enrolled in other public assistance programs

Additionally, as an organization supporting New York City residents, we acknowledge the strides the City has taken to increase access to universal care, including the recent passage of a [package](#) supporting the vision for universal early education. As the city budget portends potential cuts to many essential programs protecting language accessibility, literacy services, funds for undocumented families, and 3-K/4-K expansion, we must ensure that the State can take necessary steps to continue the momentum for protecting care services. While this progress at the city and state level is encouraging and critical, it **does not yet ensure the support needed for an inclusive sector**. Increasing economic challenges present obstacles to living in the state, leaving ourselves and our families with some of the following concerns:

- Many early education centers remain under enrolled.
- Centers are unable to recruit and retain qualified education professionals.
- Immigrant families remain disproportionately under enrolled, while providers lack guidance and funding for supporting incoming asylum-seekers and families regardless of present immigration status.
- There are insufficient seats for students in need of early intervention services.
- Families and providers persistent challenges accessing and understanding the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

II. The Under-enrollment Crisis

In our service across New York City, and further reiterated in discussions with our early education centers to gather pressing concerns for this written testimony, EEC providers across New York remain below necessary enrollment thresholds. In [2020](#), "less than 1 in 4 children under five citywide" were enrolled in publicly-funded care. While the pandemic placed significant strain on enrollment for providers, decreases in center enrollment have persisted beyond the pandemic. [Despite an increase in available seats](#), more than half of New Yorkers live in a [childcare desert](#), which suggests that **our current strategy needs revision**.

Especially under our current system which facilitates reimbursement for providers based on fluctuating attendance, providers and their staff remain in jeopardy. We can help providers increase enrollment by decreasing barriers excluding families currently ineligible for assistance while increasing access to the types of unique services in great demand but with limited supply. While many families are eligible for care, not all are enrolled. We must expand guidance and direct assistance to facilitate more eligible families in securing their allotted services. Additionally, support is needed for non-traditional programs providing services for families who work outside of standard "business hours", need summer care, 24-hour care etc. Also, the available [seats in early intervention classrooms](#) are insufficient, restricting several families from accessing care at centers closer and more convenient to them. Decreasing these barriers to entry, among others, can expand the opportunities for families to fill enrollment gaps that providers are desperately seeking to close.

III. Educator and Staff Turnover

While early education students and families face consistent challenges to accessing quality care, providers need dire help maintaining quality in their services as staff attrition presents daily strain on classrooms. The evidence demonstrating early educators' reasons for leaving the profession **has been clear**. Early educators are:

- undercompensated
- undervalued
- lacking in growth opportunities within the profession

[Analysis](#) of pivotal factors causing quality educators to avoid or leave the sector finds that pre-service factors like inadequate training, the costs of tuition and credentialing, and looming education loans impact students' decision to pursue education as a career and leave those entering the field ill-equipped to tackle challenging workplace conditions. Moreover, once they enter the profession, early educators must receive the compensation necessary to provide the complex services, and individual attention students need in the early care setting.

IV. Protections for Immigrant families and Incoming Asylum-Seekers

New York City has taken a necessary stance in protecting undocumented families in education through Project Open Arms. [The City noted](#) that "19,000 asylum seekers have arrived in New York City, including more than 5,500 students who have entered the public school system." As the number of asylum-seeking families needing protection increases statewide, **clear guidance specific to early care providers and funding to support this vision are urgently needed**. As much of the current resources and structured guidance has been directed to/by the NYCDOE, and the service of young children covers a broad spectrum of non-DOE providers (family-based care, center-based care, etc.), we cannot forget about providing guidance and appropriate provisions to support early education students serviced through a wide net of support structures. EEC providers have been left with many questions about how best to support and process undocumented families needing care. At this point, the State law does not take a firm stance supporting undocumented children's' right to EEC. We must increase the presence of clear and direct support from the State to protect the mixed delivery system of

educators serving children of asylum-seekers and families in need of care as they move through the immigration casework process.

V. Recommendations

To begin tackling the challenges addressed above, we recommended the following provisions and considerations as a step in the right direction towards equity in EEC for NY State:

A. Support the Workforce:

It is no mistake that a field occupied predominantly by womxn and mainly supported by immigrants and womxn of color is one of the most [unfairly compensated professions](#). The under compensation and undervaluation of this sector results from systemic inequity, sexism, and racism. **Early educators across New York State deserve salary parity with their primary education peers** with equivalent experience and educational attainment. Moreover, other critical staff, including center directors, assistant teachers, administrative assistants, and other support staff, need increased and consistent compensation to ensure centers can function with quality. While we work to support pay parity for early educators and an overall increase in compensation for the sector, educators need relief from immediate challenges that are driving their departure from the field. Long term, **we support legislation that would commit New York State to a new provider reimbursement methodology and pay scale**. Meanwhile, to support and compensate education professionals remaining in the field during high attrition, center closures, and more, **the State should establish a short-term workforce compensation fund** to raise median child care worker wages over the next year.

Beyond direct compensation, **early educators need opportunities for growth and access to professional advancement** through credentialing, post-secondary education, and other professional development opportunities necessary to provide quality education. Concurrently, we must find ways to establish concrete **recognition for years of experience in the field reflected in educators' pay scale and professional advancement**, as many qualified and experienced early educators are excluded from opportunities for professional growth as a consequence of value placed only on traditional educational criteria. Additionally, early educator-specific loan forgiveness opportunities, like those outlined in the [Child care professionals loan forgiveness program](#), will be essential in drawing aspiring educators to the field, creating a strong base of consistent professionals within the state, and retaining and incentivizing current educators interested in pursuing higher education.

B. Increase enrollment by decreasing barriers to care:

We can help providers increase enrollment in EEC by decreasing barriers that prevent eligible families from accessing care through the following policies:

- Ensuring **funding and protections for programs offering non-traditional care**. With under [10% of contracted providers](#) providing critical services like full-day and full-year care, the State can support these programs by providing a monthly per-child supplement for non-traditional care and a grant program for providers seeking to offer non-traditional services.
- We must decrease reciprocity barriers and **shorten the bridge between social services like SNAP, Medicaid, WIC, and CCAP** by supporting presumptive eligibility for families eligible for these other social services and adopting categorical assistance eligibility to decrease delays in paperwork processing and avoid delays in providing timely aid. Hence, families enrolled in public assistance programs can immediately qualify for CCAP.
- **Developing a statewide online application for assistance**, eligibility determination and recertification, and provider payment processes to ensure that child care assistance and available childcare services are centralized in a user-friendly digital platform

C. Help us support immigrant families and asylum-seekers in the EEC system:

Protections, funding, and support for immigrant families and asylum-seekers must extend to the EEC sector statewide. As [Mayor Eric Adam's office has called on](#) the federal government and agencies to support our service to these families, we require support from the State to ensure these provisions can be realized. We recommend that the **State extend eligibility for CCAP to undocumented children**. Additionally, as we expand financial eligibility to subsidies, the State must ensure that clear and practical DOE and OCFS guidance is created to support childcare providers in outlining the resources, best practices, and procedures necessary for processing incoming families with these unique criteria.

D. A holistic provisions package that establishes a framework and funding for sector-wide changes:

While the previously stated policies will move us toward incremental changes for members of the EEC system, a universal vision for progress that ensures funding and implementation guidance is vital for our long-term strategy for the sector. We must continue to strive for a universal right to early education statewide. As supported by policies like the [Universal Childcare Act](#), **we recommend an ultimate push towards a holistic system of support** that guarantees reliable and consistent funding for early education, explicit protections for undocumented families, a restructuring of educator compensation and training, and a re-evaluation of means testing to ensure subsidies capture the true cost of quality childcare. With the proposed budget restrictions at the city level, which could impact the future rollout of the 3-K system, the time for increased childcare expansions at the state level for children three and four years old is now!

VI. Conclusion

Jumpstart prioritizes a more expansive, equitable, and quality universal early childhood education system for children, families, providers, and educators. A combination of increased investment to support the Child Care Assistance Program and educator compensation, a shift in our respect and recognition for the professionals of the EEC field, and both clear and timely guidance for New York agencies and childcare providers looking to support asylum seekers, will put us in the position to create the educational spaces children need during their critical early years to be set up lifelong learning and flourishing. New York City has set a crucial precedent in striving toward universalism in the EEC field. We look forward to continued collaboration with Chair Brisport, the Committee and the State in executing this vision for all of New York.

Jasmin Norford, FAO Schwarz Fellow at [Jumpstart](#)
505 Eighth Avenue, Suite 303 | New York, NY 10018 | jasmin.norford@jstart.org | (678)-780-7400