

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY
SENATOR, 63RD DISTRICT

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January 7, 2016

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

As the Western New York community continues to experience an economic rebirth, thanks in large part to your tremendous commitment to our region, it is imperative that working men and women have access to quality, affordable child care. Many programs offered by the state to make child care affordable rely on federal Child Care Development Block Grants (CCDBG) for funding. As you know, in 2014 the federal government implemented new health and safety requirements, as well as additional family-friendly guidelines and increased transparency and accountability measures for child care providers and New York State. While these new mandates aim to improve child care program safety, the New York State Division of Budget estimates that these new requirements could cost upwards of \$90 million for the state to implement.

I am concerned that these mandates, while well-intentioned and needed, will force the state to consider decreasing the number families with incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty level that could receive child care subsidies through the state. Any cut in the funding available to fulfill these needs for families across the state would be devastating to the many New Yorkers who rely on such programs to help pay for necessary child care. Proposing any cuts to this program threatens the economic progress we have had in Western New York preparing our workforce for the many jobs we have created through the Buffalo Billion and private-sector development.

In addition to ensuring that the current child care subsidy program is not diminished in any way, I believe we should consider expanding the child care subsidies available to working New Yorkers. Last year, I pushed for an expansion of the child care subsidy program through the Workforce Development Institute (WDI) facilitated enrollment program in Erie County to allow families with up to 275% of the federal poverty level to participate in the subsidy program. In 2006, WDI was authorized by the New York State Legislature to create a pilot program in Albany and Oneida counties to provide child care subsidies to working families with

income up to 275% of the federal poverty level. Since then, the facilitated Enrollment Program has expanded into the following counties: Monroe, Onondaga, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady. In these counties, the program has been successful and it is now time to further expand this program into Erie County.

With annual child care costs for two children typically exceeding \$25,000 in Erie County, WDI aims to help families that do not qualify for high-need assistance, but are within recognized poverty levels nevertheless. This gap is largely overlooked, and the families, along with their children, suffer for it. By providing this funding for child care opportunities, these young children have better chances at excelling in school, their propensity to commit young-life crimes is decreased, and their parenting skills for later in life are nurtured and developed at this young, critical age.

Additionally, parents will be better able to manage their work and families. Too often, parents are forced to make the difficult decision to reduce their work hours, refuse a promotion, or leave the workforce altogether. By providing an additional funding source for child care subsidies with a significantly higher income limit, New York State will help ease the squeeze on the working class in Erie County.

For these reasons, as you prepare your 2016-17 Executive Budget, I urge you to protect the current level of child care subsidy funding and to consider including a \$2.5 million appropriation to expand the Workforce Development Institute's Child Care Facilitated Enrollment Program to Erie County. I look forward to working together to ensure that hardworking parents can participate in Western New York's economic renewal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy M. Kennedy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Timothy M. Kennedy
New York State Senator, 63rd District