



**Elizabeth Wolkomir, Deputy Commissioner of the Division of
Child and Family Well-being**

**Testimony to the New York State Senate
Committee on Children and Families
January 26, 2023**

“Child Care”

Good morning. My name is Elizabeth Wolkomir and I am the Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Child and Family Well-being at the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS). Congratulations Senator Brisport on your re-appointment as Chair of the Children and Families Committee and thank you to you and the Committee for holding today's important hearing on child care.

The Division that I lead focuses on investing in families and communities, including through the provision of vouchers that help parents cover the cost of child care. As the local social service district, ACS is responsible for administering the federal and state child care block grant funding, a portion of which is transferred to the Department of Education (DOE) for the City's contracted child care system, and the remainder of which supports child care vouchers issued by ACS and the New York City Human Resources Administration.

Currently over 56,000 New York City children receive child care vouchers. Approximately 22,000 are for families receiving public assistance, which is the population which we are mandated to serve under state and federal law. The remaining vouchers are for vulnerable families (homeless, child welfare involved, etc.) and for children from low income families.

Last June, Mayor Eric Adams released, "[Accessible, Equitable, High-quality, Affordable: A Blueprint for Child Care and Early Education in New York City.](#)" This ambitious Blueprint set five goals: to make child care accessible, affordable and rooted in equity; to increase enrollment; to ensure programs are high quality; and to establish systems of support for the early childhood workforce.

Much of the work we are doing in New York City to implement the Blueprint has been strengthened by important changes that this Committee, along with the rest of the Senate, Assembly and Governor made last year to increase the resources localities have for subsidized child care; increase the income eligibility for low-income child care assistance; increase the rate for child care providers; and provide stabilization grants to providers. Most recently, the Governor signed legislation the City and this Committee worked to pass, which will enable localities to authorize child care for up to 24 months (rather than just 12 months), providing much-needed stability to families and providers. We look forward to seeing the chapter amendments pass quickly and working with OCFS to implement this in NYC.

Along with our colleagues at DOE and the Mayor's Office, we have seen tremendous progress in the last year. I am going to share some of the achievements we have made at ACS. ACS successfully eliminated the child care voucher waitlist, reaching out to the families of all the children on the waitlist to see if they were still interested in a child care voucher, and then issuing vouchers to all those interested and eligible. At the same time, ACS prioritized vouchers for families living in 17 high need communities¹, with the assistance of targeted marketing and outreach campaigns. Once the voucher waitlist was exhausted this fall, ACS opened up low-income voucher applications to families from all New York City communities. In just the past 10 months,

¹ The 17 priority communities have household income and child/family poverty below the citywide average, adult unemployment above the citywide average, and limited access to child care. The 17 prioritized communities are: Central Harlem, East Harlem, Washington Heights/Inwood, Hunts Point/Longwood, Morrisania/Crotona, Highbridge/Concourse, Fordham/ University Heights, Belmont/East Tremont, Kingsbridge Heights/Bedford Park, Parkchester/Soundview, Morris Park/Bronxdale, Bedford Stuyvesant, East New York/Starrett City, Coney Island, Brownsville, and Rockaway/Broad Channel.

we have nearly doubled the number of children from low-income families enrolled in child care using a voucher.

In addition, with support from the Mayor's office and the City Council, ACS received \$10 million of city funds to launch a new program – Promise NYC - to provide child care assistance to children whose immigration status currently precludes them from participating in the subsidized child care programs funded by federal and state funds (namely, undocumented children). To implement Promise NYC, ACS has contracted with four community based organizations that have deep experience and trusted relationships with the City's immigrant communities. Promise NYC launched this month.

We know there is more work to be done to build on this progress and expand access to high-quality, affordable child care. In the City, we will be continuing to take steps to implement the Blueprint, which will soon include the launch of a new portal that will allow families to complete their application for child care assistance online. We were also excited to hear in the State of the State about some of the Governor's new proposals such as increasing income eligibility to the federal limit; allowing adjunctive eligibility which uses income determinations for other benefits such as SNAP, HEAP, Medicaid and WIC, to determine income eligibility for child care; incentivizing the development of child care space; and creating a workforce retention grant. The City looks forward to working with the Governor and the Legislature to ensure these proposals are adopted.

We also look forward to continuing our work with the Legislature to take additional steps to strengthen our ability to best meet the needs of children and families.

We were deeply disappointed that the legislation to delink the hours of child care assistance from the hours a caregiver works or goes to school was enacted in a manner that limits its applicability only to child care funded by localities. We continue to believe this policy would benefit parents, children, and providers and are eager to work with the legislature to pass another bill that will finally flexibility and stability families and child care programs badly need. In addition, while we are pleased with efforts to increase the income ceiling for low-income child care assistance, we continue to support legislation that would eliminate the current state requirement that a family make at least minimum wage to be eligible. We believe this rule leaves out some of the families who are most in need of child care assistance.

And finally, we believe in the vision of this committee—that child care should be universal. We look forward to working together to continue to bring us closer to making that a reality.