

News from Senator George M. Borrello

57th Senate District

Representing Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, and portions of Livingston County

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SENATOR BORRELLO CALLS ON STATE TO RELEASE FEDERAL AID TO SUPPORT CHILD CARE PROVIDERS



State, local and federal representatives gathered with child care providers and advocates today to urge the state to release CARES act funds to help child care centers reopen to help parents return to work. From left to right: Jacqueline Phelps, representative for Congressman Tom Reed, Assemblyman Andy Goodell, Senator George Borrello, County Executive PJ Wendel, Beth Starks, founder and Executive Director of Chautauqua Lake Child Care Center, Virginia Miller, Executive Director of the Lake Shore Family Care Center.

IRVING, NY – Senator George M. Borrello and Assemblyman Andy Goodell called on New York State Thursday to release millions in federal dollars the state received from Washington D.C. to support child-care providers so parents can return to work.

Joined by child-care professionals at the Lake Shore Family Care Center in Irving, Senator Borrello said the decision by Albany to withhold aid from Washington is slowing the state’s economic recovery from COVID-19.

“Child-care workers are essential workers,” Senator Borrello said. “At the height of the crisis, despite the risk to their own families, registered child-care providers continued caring for the children of front-line and emergency workers, so those workers could provide essential goods and services to us and our families.”

In April, New York State received \$164.6 million in federal CARES Act funding earmarked to support child-care programs and providers.

Beth Starks, is founder and Executive Director of Chautauqua Lake Child Care Center, Assistant Professor and Early Childhood Education Coordinator at Jamestown Community College, and a member of the Governor’s Child Care Availability Task Force.

Ms. Starks said of the \$164.6 million in CARES Act funding given the state, New York has allocated \$95 million but has only released \$30 million to child-care providers. She said the state should at least release the \$65 million in federal funds it has set aside for child-care programs.

"Pre-Covid, child care was in a crisis situation, preventing people from going to work," she said. "We are in what's called a child care desert because there isn't enough child care here in Western New York, or in much of New York State."

According to the Center for American Progress, 64 percent of New Yorkers lived in a child care desert (before the pandemic), which means that there are either no child care providers or so few options that there are more than three times as many children as licensed child care slots.

Ms. Starks said in the past four months, the situation has gotten much worse.

"Over 50 percent of my colleagues in Chautauqua County have closed their doors," she said. "Nationally, it is estimated that about half of them never will open again. We cannot re-open New York without child care because there is nowhere for children to go and that includes children from infants all the way up through the teenage years."

Assemblyman Andy Goodell joined Senator Borrello in asking the state to release the funds.

In a letter he sent Governor Cuomo earlier this year, Assemblyman Goodell asked the governor to follow the recommendations of his own child-care advisors.

Assemblyman Goodell urged Governor Cuomo to release the aid "in a manner consistent with the recommendations of your Child Care Task Force headed by Sheila Poole, Commissioner of the Office of Children and Family Services, and Roberta Readon, Commissioner of the Department of Labor."

"Today I am joining Senator Borrello and Assemblyman Goodell and officials across the state in the Childcare Day of Action to call on New York State to release the CARES Act funding to local governments and childcare providers," said Chautauqua County Executive PJ Wendel. "We raised this issue months ago, when Counties were told the Governor was not aware that counties and local providers wanted the CARES Act funding. We requested Chautauqua County's share of funding at that time, and now it is even more critical that childcare providers have access to these funds as more parents are returning to work, and many schools are returning with instruction models requiring at least some days of remote-learning."

Senator Borrello said the care provided by professional child care workers is critical to Western New York's resurgence.

"These businesses are struggling now because their enrollment is down due to the pandemic," he said. "The state needs to release the remaining CARES Act funding to ensure that our childcare providers are able to deliver the critical service that is the foundation for the resurgence of our economy."

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