



## **Staffing Shortages Due to Low Wages Are Driving the Child Care Crisis in New York**

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, February 24, 2025*

**Media Contact:** Nicole Correia [ncorreia@scaany.org](mailto:ncorreia@scaany.org)

ALBANY, N.Y. – More than 16,000 **children across New York State cannot receive child care** due to understaffing impacting child care programs in every region of the state, according to preliminary analysis of a survey reaching over 1,250 child care programs statewide.

The survey, conducted by the advocacy group [Empire State Campaign for Child Care](https://www.scaany.org/), reached providers in nearly every county across New York State. It found **2,216 unfilled child care positions** including qualified lead teachers, in-home child care assistants, substitutes, and paraprofessionals to support children with disabilities.

**The survey found that 56.5% of child care centers are currently experiencing a staffing shortage** – defined as one or more staff roles that are currently unfilled. As a result, over 250 classrooms in the respondents' child care centers and afterschool programs are dark, serving no children at all despite being part of existing programs.

"The survey data illustrates what child care providers across the state have been telling us for years: without sustained state investment in the child care workforce, they are unable to meet families' needs," said Dede Hill, Director of Policy at Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy and a founding member of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care. "When a child care center can't pay qualified educators the wages they deserve, positions go unfilled and classrooms sit empty. Meanwhile, families remain on long waitlists for child care openings."

Some respondents noted that the retention grants they received the last two years were beneficial, many expressed disappointments over the lack of permanency in these grants, which limited their positive impacts on staff retention, the availability of additional services, and overall morale. This underscores the urgent need for permanent investment directly in the wages of the child care workforce, [which earns less than 96% of occupations statewide](#).

"Staffing shortages create a safety risk for our children, and this is unacceptable to the families that we serve. We need additional permanent staffing funds to hire, retain, and train potential employees, so

they can make this a career, rather than a job!” said Jason Wellington, a child care provider in Watervliet, NY.

"If we continue to undervalue child care workers, we will continue to lose them,” **said Senator Jabari Brisport.** “The Universal Child Care Act is designed to rapidly and deeply invest in the child care workforce both because it is right to pay our child care workers fairly as educators, and because without that investment New York simply will not have enough child care workers to make universal child care possible."

These staffing shortages are hitting supply where families need it the most, worsening the shortage of infant and toddler care across the state. **86% of home-based child care programs reported that they could provide much-needed care for infants and toddlers if they were fully staffed.**

"This survey, Comptroller DiNapoli's recent report, and the recommendations of Governor Hochul's own Child Care Availability Task Force make it crystal clear: we must pay the workforce! Any other investments in child care will fall short if we do not first and foremost provide a sustained \$1.2billion to support the child care workforce," **said Assemblymember Andrew Hevesi.**

Staffing shortages have ripple effects that extend beyond fewer slots for families. In fact, 51% of programs experiencing a shortage report temporarily reducing capacity or closing classrooms on short notice due to staff absences, leaving families to scramble for last-minute care or miss work.

**The Empire State Campaign for Child Care continues to call for a \$1.2 billion investment in a permanent child care workforce compensation fund in this year’s budget. Investment in the child care workforce will help New York’s families find the care they need.**

“These survey results affirm that we cannot reach the goal of universal child care in New York, we must invest in the child care workforce,” **said Shoshana Hershkowitz, Empire State Campaign for Child Care campaign manager.** “We call on the Legislature and Governor Hochul to include \$1.2 billion in this year's budget to compensate the workforce that cares for and educates our youngest New Yorkers."

###

## **About the Empire State Campaign for Child Care**

The Empire State Campaign for Child Care (ESCCC) is a statewide coalition of parents, child care educators, and advocates who believe that every family in New York State deserves high quality, universal child care and that every child care educator deserves to earn a thriving wage.

The campaign was founded in 2017, and advocates at the state and federal levels for investment in child care that best serves the needs of all of New York's families and child care educators. Learn more at <https://empirestatechildcare.org/>