



Top Universal Child Care NYS Budget Recommendations: March 2026

The Empire State Campaign for Child Care applauds and fully supports the Executive Budget's proposed \$1.7 billion in new funding for early childhood care and education. The Assembly and Senate one-house bills adopt the Executive Budget's historic investments in child care, and propose additional investments and policy change, bringing New York closer to what is needed to set New York on a strong path toward universal child care, but more is still needed.

We urge inclusion of the following investments and policies in the final enacted budget in addition to the Executive Budget's historic new investments in child care assistance, universal child care pilots, and pre-K, 3-K and 2-K:

WORKFORCE

- **Adopt the Senate's proposal to include at least \$500 million in the final budget for the child care workforce, along with language that makes this fund permanent and the compensation supplements ongoing.** This is a necessary investment if New York is to tackle the field's persistent workforce shortages - which worsens the state's capacity shortfall - and achieve the goal of universal child care across the state.

CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CCAP)

- **Add additional state funds to ensure communities across the state can clear the CCAP waitlist and meet demand (approximately \$1.2 billion); adopt the Assembly proposal to make supplemental CCAP funds for counties outside of New York City to ensure counties can reopen enrollment without delay (budget language change); adopt the Assembly proposal to end the inequitable minimum earning requirement (Article VII language and an additional \$18.7 million).**
 - **New York City will need another \$1.2 billion in CCAP funding for the remainder of FFY 2026 (\$460 million) and FFY 2027 (\$750 million) to clear the waitlist and meet projected need,** according to analysis conducted by The Children's Agenda's Pete Nabozny and the Center for NYC Affairs' Lauren Melodia. In New York City, the CCAP/voucher waitlist currently includes more than 16,000 children, and has been growing by about 1,500 children per month since last spring.
 - Notably, in New York City fiscal year (CFY) 2025, 26,658 DOE-contracted seats for infants, toddlers, 3- and 4-year olds were unfilled; the total budget for these seats was \$565.7 million.¹ The \$565.7 million in resources could be reallocated to help address the current CCAP waitlist. The City could also work to place families on the waitlist into these already contracted seats.

- Assuming state CCAP funds are allocated to counties according to a formula similar to that used to determine last year's distribution, the Executive Budget's \$1.2 billion in new funds should be sufficient to clear the waitlists/reopen enrollment and meet anticipated demand in counties outside of New York City.
- **Adopt the Assembly's proposal in the final enacted budget - with adjustments, as necessary - to ensure the \$155 million in supplemental CCAP funds available to counties outside of New York City can be accessed immediately so the 34 counties that have closed enrollment due to inadequate funds can quickly reopen CCAP enrollment upon passage of the budget.**
- **Adopt the Assembly's proposed statutory language addition of \$18.7 million for CCAP to end the deeply inequitable rule making parents who are paid less than, on average, the minimum wage ineligible for child care assistance for their children.**

Fully funding CCAP now is critical to the successful, and equitable rollout of universal child care and pre-K. Pre-K/3-K expansions alone will not ensure low-income parents can work and achieve economic stability because many low-income families rely on CCAP and pre-K to afford care for their young children and/or for afterschool and summer care for their pre-K and elementary age children; pre-K alone does not provide the coverage needed for many working families. Further, the CCAP/ voucher waitlists are playing a role in keeping compensation for child care educators low by leaving programs with empty seats, particularly family-based programs. This could lead to more program closures just as New York needs to be expanding child care capacity for universal child care. As the state expands universal child care, CCAP can be scaled down.

AFTERSCHOOL, PRE-K, UNIVERSAL PILOTS

- **Add additional funding for afterschool (the Assembly proposes \$100 million; the Senate \$30 million) to help restore the loss of 48,000 LEAPS slots in recent years.**
- **Adopt the Senate proposal to include transportation for Pre-K.**
- **Adopt the Assembly proposal to extend the Governor's rate increase proposal to existing 3-K programs across the state.**
- **Adopt the Senate proposal to add \$34 million to fund additional universal child care pilot programs throughout New York State.**

POST-BUDGET PRIORITY

Advance policy to transform the CCAP program from a county administered program to one administered by the state (except for NYC) to make the program more efficient and equitable, and to create the scaffolding around which to build statewide universal child care. (A. 10494 (Clark)).

The Empire State Campaign for Child Care (ESCCC) is a statewide coalition of parents, 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 level for investment in child care that best serves the needs of New York's families and child care educators.

¹ 9,161 of these empty seats were for full-day, full year care (the remaining 17,497 were for school day/year care only). When combined with the [City's average reported cost per seat](#), the total budget for these seats was \$565.7 million (\$251.1 million for the full-day, full-year seats).