



Empire State

CAMPAIGN FOR CHILD CARE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - March 31, 2026

Media Contact:

Shoshana Hershkowitz | shershkowitz@empirestatechildcare.org | 516.381.3417

Led By The “Mom Squad”, Lawmakers and Advocates Call For Increased Investment in the Child Care Assistance Program and Compensation for Early Childhood Educators

Press conference photos and videos included below.

March 31, Albany, NY- The Empire State Campaign For Child Care, Alliance for Quality Education, and the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy joined with Assemblymember Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas and the “Mom Squad”, a group of lawmakers who advocate for policies that serve the needs of children and families, to call for increased investments in the Child Care Assistance Program, as well as compensation for early childhood educators, in the final FY 2027 budget.

The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) provides subsidies to families who earn up to 85% of the state’s median income. To date, 34 counties have closed enrollment or are carrying waitlists. In New York City, over 17,000 children and families are unable to access the child care assistance they qualify for. Lawmakers and advocates called for increased funding to clear all waitlists across the state.

Lawmakers and advocates also called for the inclusion of at least \$500 million for funding to stabilize the child care workforce, which earns less than [96% of all jobs in the state](#). This proposed funding was included in the Senate’s one-house budget proposal, but is absent from both the Assembly’s proposal and the Governor’s Executive budget.

The group applauded the historic investments in universal child care included in Governor Hochul’s budget proposal. However, missing from that proposal are investments in child care assistance and child care providers that are foundational to ensuring an equitable rollout of universal child care in New York. That rollout must prioritize low-income families and recognize that universal child care can only be achieved when the workforce is paid a thriving wage.

“Our child care system is at a breaking point, and working families are paying the price. With more than 17,000 children on the waitlist for the Child Care Assistance Program in New York City—and that number growing every month—we cannot accept a budget that leaves low-income families waiting on the sidelines while we work toward universal child care. If we are serious about equity, we must prioritize those who need support the most and fully fund CCAP to eliminate the waitlist. At the same time, we must invest in the child care workforce—an overwhelming majority of whom are women of color, who sustain this system every day—by raising wages and ending a model that relies on poverty pay. Building a truly universal system means valuing both families and workers, and that starts with making the investments now,” **said Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas.**

“No family should be left waiting months for something as essential as child care. With waitlists across the state in the thousands and growing, it’s clear that our current investment falls short of the need. If we are serious about building a truly universal child care system, we must start by prioritizing low-income families and fully funding CCAP to ensure every eligible family receives assistance. At the same time, we need to raise wages for child care workers, the backbone of this system, who have been underpaid for far too long. I join my colleagues calling for better solutions to administer the CCAP program while increasing these critical funds in the final budget. I look forward to continuing our work for a child care system that works for all families, providers, and children in New York,” **said Assemblymember Sarah Clark.**

“When we invest in child care, we not only help working families struggling to make ends meet—we build the foundation for a strong economy that benefits everyone. Our success will depend on reliable funding that enables child care providers to retain qualified staff and maintain safe facilities. Ensuring access to quality child care is achievable with the State as a reliable partner now and in the years to come,” **said Assemblymember MaryJane Shimsky.**

“To address ongoing CCAP shortfalls, the final budget must include the additional \$1.2 billion needed to meet statewide demand, allow counties to access supplemental funds immediately to reopen enrollment, and eliminate the minimum earnings requirement that excludes our working families. Moreover, to ensure the success of these investments, we must invest at least \$500 million in the child care workforce to stabilize providers and expand capacity,” **said Assemblymember Yudelka Tapia.**

“Child care is an investment that sets our children up for success while allowing parents and caregivers to get back to work, creating and ensuring good-paying jobs and bolstering the local economy,” said Assemblymember Didi Barrett. “Representing a largely rural district that covers parts of both Dutchess and Columbia Counties, I am

committed to making sure CCAP is adequately funded – reaching children of all abilities in all regions of the state,” **said Assemblymember Didi Barrett.**

“We cannot deliver universal child care to New York State with tens of thousands of children and families unable to access the assistance they qualify for. Nor can we scale up to meet the needs of families across the state without growing the child care workforce. To accomplish this, we must clear the Child Care Assistance Program waitlists across the state, and include \$500M in compensation for early childhood educators in this year’s budget. We cannot neglect struggling families and caregivers,” **said Shoshana Hershkowitz, Campaign Manager for the Empire State Campaign for Child Care.**

“While the Governor once again spends the calendar year calling herself a champion of working families and, in an election year, talks about moving New York toward universal child care, she seems to be unmoving in including necessary additional funding for the Child Care Assistance Program to clear the growing waiting list of kids statewide and refuses to add any funding for the workforce. Families are being shut out of care, and educators are being pushed out of the profession. This is the reality of an underfunded system and a refusal to raise revenue to fund it. We’re calling on the Senate and Assembly to stay strong on the revenue proposals they’ve put forward to ensure funding for child care and to address affordability,” **said Marina Marcou-O’Malley, Co Executive Director of the Alliance for Quality Education.**

“Programs like mine have suffered because of the state’s lack of investment. I’ve had to make unfortunate and difficult decisions to keep my business operating and available for those who need me. I’ve charged less for my services, created payment plans and have even watched children for free while working long hours trying to keep my business going and families secured, because I care for the families and children. Child care is not a luxury. It is essential for working families,” **said Sheila Cora, owner, De Corazon Family Day Care in Green Island, New York.**

“The child care community is thrilled that New York State and New York City Leaders have committed to achieving universal child care, and that the Executive Budget and one-houses contain record investments for child care assistance, pre-K and universal child care pilots. And we are beyond grateful for the longtime leadership of the Mom Squad – and the dads and aunties and uncles – in the Legislature. But we are also worried that without full funding for child care assistance to reopen enrollment and serve all eligible families who seek it, along with funds for workforce supplements, the very families struggling the most to afford child care may be left out of the first stages of the rollout to universal child care. Our call to state leaders: add sufficient funds to meet demand for child care assistance, and at least \$500

million for the child care workforce in this year's budget to ensure a successful, equitable rollout to universal child care that prioritizes the families struggling every day to make ends meet," **said Dede Hill, Vice President of Policy, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy**

About the Empire State Campaign for Child Care

[Empire State Campaign for Child Care](#) 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 has played a key role in advancing the state's child care investments.

Photos and Videos - for use by media:

Credit: Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy

Video clips:

- [Shoshana Hershkowitz, coordinator of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care, on why investment is needed in both child care assistance and the child care workforce.](#)
- [Assemblymember Gonzales-Rojas speaks about wages for the child care workforce.](#)
- [Assemblymember Sarah Clark speaks about the need for higher wages for child care providers.](#)
- [Assemblymember Andrew Hevesi on why universal child care requires a thriving child care workforce.](#)
- [Shoshana Hershkowitz lays out the budget ask](#) and the funding required to make equitable universal child care a reality in NYS



