

## Response to the Governor's State of the State Address

The Children's Agenda commends Governor Hochul for laying out a vision for how state government can and should work for families. We appreciate her acknowledgements of children and the families, educators and child care professionals who care for them. We agree with the Governor that this is "a moment of great possibility" and a time to be innovative.

The agenda the Governor laid out is ambitious. However, the size and scope of the challenges New York families are facing require more than mere ambition. They require bold action. Expanding existing programs is not sufficient. We must lay new foundations on which families can build their children's futures. Toward that end, we urge the Governor and all leaders in state government to take action in four areas:

- 1. Early Childhood Education and Care** -- Investing in child care assistance programs that make quality care affordable for more families is a step in the right direction. However, the investments announced by the Governor and the reliance on federal funds is too modest of an expansion. Consistent with the recommendations of the Child Care Availability Task Force, New York must enact a comprehensive plan to move toward universal, affordable, high quality child care.
- 2. Early Childhood Developmental Services** -- Universal early childhood education is only universal when young children with delays and disabilities are included. We call for all of the recently enacted Covered Lives assessment to be invested in the Early Intervention program so as to increase reimbursement rates for service providers. We also recommend increased, sustainable funding for preschool special education services.
- 3. PK-12 Education** -- The Governor's reaffirmation of state government's prior commitment to fully fund Foundation Aid by the 2023-2024 school year is important. To help New York's children recover from the unprecedented disruptions in their education, we urge a robust investment toward full funding this year. Additionally, the Governor's call for increases in school-based mental health professionals is crucial. Creating positive school climates where all children can learn is best served by enacting the Solutions Not Suspensions bill (S.7198) that limits exclusionary discipline and promotes restorative practices.
- 4. Child Poverty** -- Many of the workforce, economic development, and housing goals the Governor committed to will help alleviate child poverty. To ensure we bring our full strength to bear on reducing child poverty, we call for expanding the Empire State Child Credit to include children under the age of four and rapidly convening the Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council.

While New York state has received historic levels of federal funding, we cannot abdicate our responsibility to take bold action, with or without those resources. The Children's Agenda stands ready to work with the Governor and all leaders who are committed to ensuring New York's children thrive.

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