

May 4, 2023

Significant Strides for Children Amid Misplaced Priorities in the NY State Budget

New York's children need a community where they can thrive in every possible way. Achieving this demands bold action in state budgeting, ensuring every investment and policy be weighed against the impact it has on children. The Children's Agenda welcomes the strides made in this year's budget, but our optimism is tempered by misplaced priorities for which children will bear the consequences.

The Children's Agenda advocates for transformative change in how New York invests in children. By organizing parents, youth, and community members and working with partners across the state, we have made progress on many issues that impact children and families every day. Most notably, the budget:

- **Provides relief to families with infants and toddlers** by expanding the Empire State Child Credit to children under 4 years of age
- **Makes quality child care more affordable for low and middle income families** by extending eligibility for child care assistance to families earning up to 85% of the state median income (currently \$93,258 for a family of four)
- **Moves New York State closer to ensuring every child has access to free, quality education** by requiring a study of how tuition rates are set for Preschool Special Education programs
- **Makes mental health supports more accessible, affordable and integrated with children's lives** by investing \$30 million into school-based mental health clinics and requiring private insurers to cover school-based mental health care regardless of whether the school is a participating provider
- **Feeds more children** by investing \$134 million to increase access to free school meals
- **Creates fiscal equity in education** by fully funding school Foundation Aid

However, the Governor and legislature failed to address three critical needs children have, choosing to prioritize niche desires of adults over basic needs of children. While the state budgeted \$882 million in film industry tax credits and funding for a football stadium, for almost 12% less they could have:

- **Shortened the time infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities wait for Early Intervention services** by increasing the rate paid to providers of critical services like speech, occupational and physical therapy (cost: approximately \$35 million)

- **Ensured every family receives the full child tax credit** by removing the eligibility phase-in, allowing the lowest income families with children to benefit from the full credit (cost: \$50 million more than budgeted)
- **Stimulated more availability of child care** by making significant, sustained investments in the child care and early education workforce rather than a temporary program (cost: \$700 million more than budgeted)

Budgets are value statements. It is unconscionable that children, especially those who are most vulnerable due to poverty, racism, health inequities and trauma, were deemed less important than the film industry and football.

There are many provisions in the budget that will make a real difference in the lives of children and for that we thank those legislators who championed children in their advocacy and leadership. We also commend the parents, youth and community members who spoke up for children. In a democracy, the people speak and the government responds. However, children rarely have a voice in that decision-making process; they rely on us to speak for them. Together, we will continue speaking boldly until children can thrive in every community in New York state.

***The Children's Agenda** is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that advocates for effective policies and drives evidence-based solutions for the health, education and success of children. We are especially committed to children who are vulnerable because of poverty, racism, health inequities and trauma.*