Imminent Threat: Without State Action, Thousands May Lose Access to Child Care

The Problem

Child care is a critical need for families in every community. In past years, New York State improved the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) by expanding eligibility and removing barriers for families to access subsidized care. Enrollment soared across the state. However, Governor Hochul, the Senate, and the Assembly have not allocated sufficient funding in their respective 2025-26 budget proposals to meet the growing demand for child care assistance. Without additional funding in this year's budget, families across the state will lose access to the child care they depend on.

The Solution

While this is late in the state's budget process, the Governor and legislature still have an opportunity to address this funding crisis before its consequences are felt by families in every corner of the state. Specifically, the final budget agreement should include at least $500 million for additional CCAP allocations in the 2025-26 budget to begin to fill the funding gap. State leaders should also direct the proposed New York Coalition for Child Care to identify and recommend a sustained funding stream to keep up with the growing need moving forward.

TheChildren'sAgenda
Smart Choices. Bold Voices.

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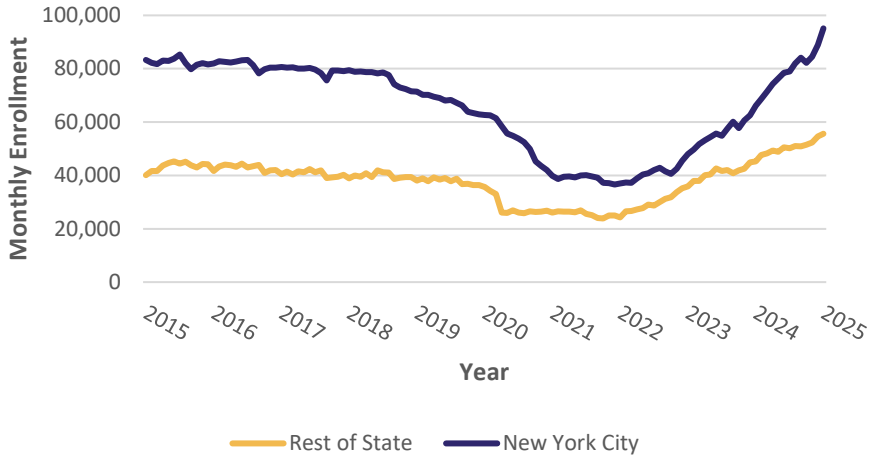
New York State's Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) ensures that more than 150,000 children from low- and moderate-income households statewide can receive safe, nurturing, and reliable care while their parents work or pursue an education. Supervised by the Office of Children and Family Services and administered by 58 social service districts (New York City and the 57 counties outside the city), CCAP is a critical support for families with young children and essential to making New York an affordable place to live and raise a family.

Due to a lack of public investment and attention, the number of children enrolled in the Child Care Assistance Program declined steadily during the 2010s before falling dramatically with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. Enrollment began recovering shortly after Governor Hochul took office in 2021 and has steadily increased over the past three years.[1] Statutory changes extended eligibility for assistance to more families, which drove growth in enrollment.[2] In 2020 and 2021, the federal government supported eligibility expansion through increased pandemic-era funding, and New York State committed to adding state funds as federal support tapered off.

Child Care Assistance Program Monthly Enrollment, January 2015 - January 2025



[1] Monthly enrollment figures are available on the OCFS website - https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/data/
[2] Statewide income eligibility increased from 200% of the federal poverty level to 300% in 2022 and then to 85% off state median income in 2023. For a family of 3, eligibility increased from $43,920 in 2021 to $91,251 in 2024.

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These eligibility expansions and budget investments, accompanied by other successful efforts[3] to streamline access to child care assistance, are among the most significant accomplishments Governor Hochul and the state legislature have achieved over the past several years. This progress is extraordinary and yet now threatened unless the State prioritizes continued investments.

Unfortunately, Governor Hochul, the Senate, and the Assembly have not allocated sufficient funds in their respective 2025-26 budget proposals to meet the growing demand for child care assistance throughout the state.[4] Without additional funding in New York's 2025-26 budget, tens of thousands of families across the state will lose access to the child care they depend on.

Currently, media attention and policy experts are focused on the funding shortfall for New York City's child care voucher program. As the most populous city in the U.S., this crisis deserves attention, of course. However, the CCAP funding shortfall is a statewide crisis, impacting 57 other social service districts in New York State. In fact, Child Care Assistance Program enrollment closed in 10 counties in Upstate New York over the past several weeks. More are expected in the next several months.

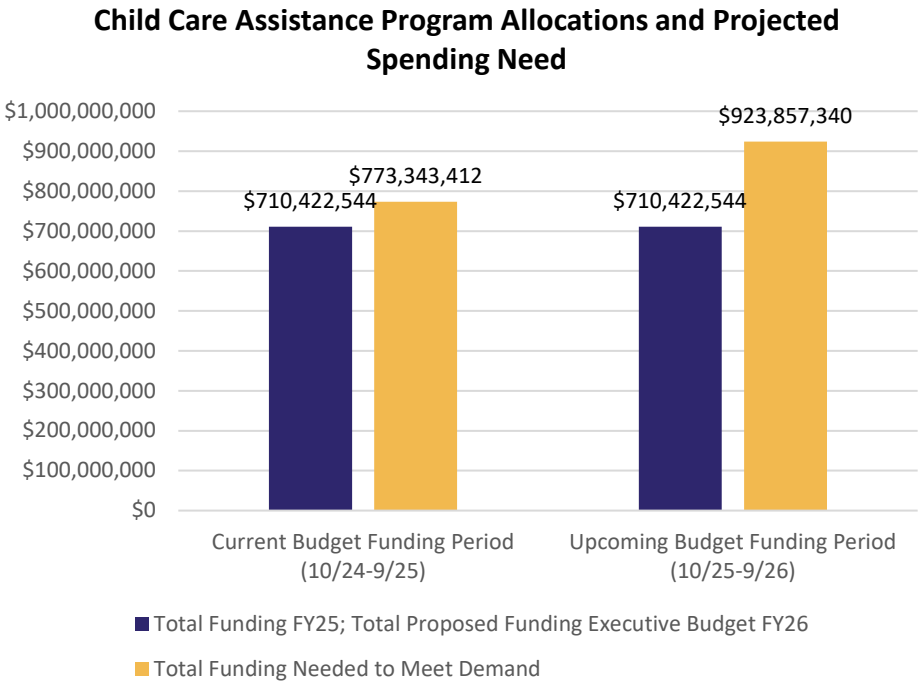
The Children's Agenda analyzed county-level Child Care Assistance Program spending and enrollment data. Both datasets suggest that, without significantly increased funding in the final 2025-26 state budget, it is likely that nearly all counties in New York State will be forced to close enrollment during the upcoming Child Care Assistance Program funding period, which runs from October 2025 through September 2026.[5]

According to Office of Children and Family Services regulations on how to prioritize cases when funds are scarce, **enrollment closures will affect both new families applying for assistance and families seeking to renew their assistance for another year.**[6]

The graph below presents projected CCAP spending and allocation data in the counties outside New York City for the current allocation period and in the period funded through this year's state budget. These estimates assume level funding for the program, as proposed by Governor Hochul in her executive budget. The projected spending need is based on a linear trend of the past 28 months of

[3] These initiatives include, among other things, the introduction of an online child care assistance application in July 2024 and administrative actions to streamline eligibility determinations for families in receipt of SNAP assistance.
[4] See Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy's Next Look for more information about the various child care budget proposals.
[5] New York's Child Care Block Grant allocation periods follow federal fiscal years, which begin in October of each year.
[6] See OCFS's October 6, 2023 Administrative Directive - https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/policies/external/2023/adm/23-OCFS-ADM-18.pdf

available claims data, showing a gap of nearly $53 million during the current funding period and $213.4 million next year.[7]



Spending estimates by county are available in Appendix A and enrollment estimates are available in Appendix B. The graph below compares the trend in county claims data against the total funding in the current and upcoming allocation periods for the counties outside New York City. If spending trends continue at their current rate of increase, monthly Child Care Assistance Program expenditures will increase from approximately $60 million per month today to $80 million per month in 2026.

[7] After considerable analysis, The Children's Agenda decided to project spending using the full 28-month dataset from OCFS because counties often submit claims well after a particular month closes. The claiming period from October 2023 through January 2025 was still open when we received this data. Projections based on claims from October 2023 through September 2024 result in a greater anticipated deficit, while projections based on claims from January 2023 through December 2024 result in a smaller anticipated deficit. In all instances, projected funding is still inadequate to meet the anticipated growing demand for child care assistance.

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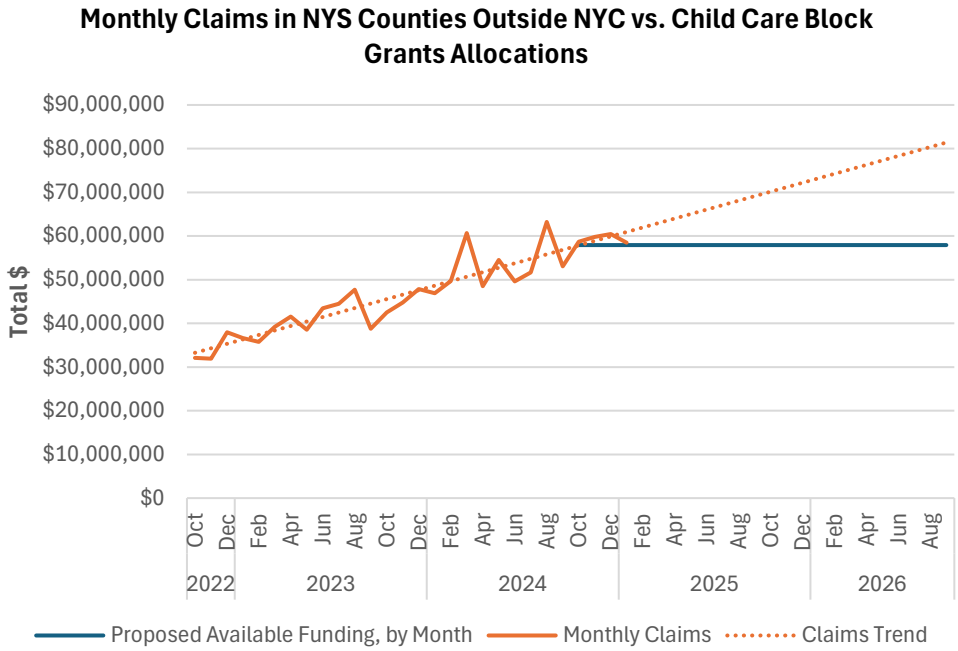
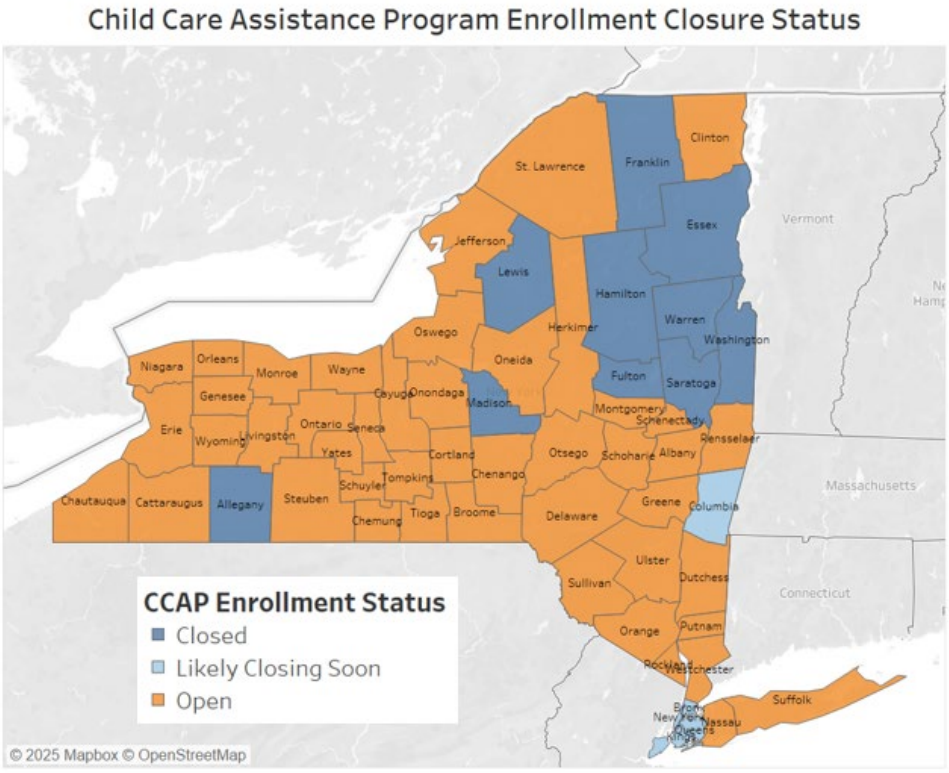


As of April 1, 2025, ten counties in upstate New York have closed enrollment to new and recertifying families. A tiny share of households receiving public assistance, who make up less than 4% of Child Care Assistance Program recipients in counties outside New York City, are exempted from this policy because counties are required to fund child care assistance for those households.



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It is difficult to predict exactly when counties will determine that they must close enrollment. Some districts accrued a sizable rollover balance of program funds during the pandemic, when low enrollment depressed spending. OCFS also granted a one-time supplemental $263.7 million allocation to counties in 2022.[8] Federal COVID relief funds intended to stabilize the child care system funded this non-recurring allocation. However, a significant portion of that allotment was later used to allow OCFS to shift the Child Care Assistance Program funding period from the state fiscal year (April-March) to the federal fiscal year (October-September). The amount of rollover and pandemic allocation funds remaining, by county, are not publicly available.

At any rate, these funds can only forestall the decision to close enrollment for a limited time. Even a sizable fund balance cannot cover growing deficits indefinitely.

Over the past several years, New York State implemented policy changes to standardize Child Care Assistance Program policies across several important domains, including eligibility levels, reimbursement for child absences, parent co-pays, and how to prioritize certain populations if funds become scarce. Although these policy changes improved equitable access to the program across the state, they also left counties with fewer tools to manage the block grant funds they receive from the state. Counties are ultimately accountable for all spending on the Child Care Assistance Program within their community, even though the state and federal governments provide nearly all funding for the program.

The primary remaining tool those districts have to avoid overspending on child care assistance is closing enrollment. They are allowed – though not required – to establish waiting lists for qualifying families who complete applications during periods of closed enrollment.

[8] See OCFS's April 29, 2022 Local Commissioner Memorandum

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Recommendations

The public and lawmakers only became aware of New York City's funding shortfall in late February and enrollment closures began in upstate counties in mid-March. While this is late in the state's budget process, the Governor and legislature still have an opportunity to address this funding crisis before its consequences are felt by families in every corner of New York state. Specifically, the final budget agreement should include the following provisions:

- Include **at least $500 million for child care assistance over what was proposed in the Executive Budget in the 2025-26 final budget** to prevent thousands of New York families from losing child care assistance.
- Direct the proposed New York Coalition for Child Care to identify and recommend a sustained funding stream that is robust enough to meet growing need to be included in the 2026-27 budget.

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Appendix A: Funding and Spending

County	2024-25 Combined Child Care Assistance Program Allocation + Maintenance of Effort	2022-23 Allocation Period Spending	2023-24 Allocation Period Spending	October 2024 - January 2025 (*or December 2024 if italicized and green*) Actual Spending	First 4 Months Annualized (Assumes No Increase in Spending or Enrollment)	2024-25 Allocation Period Projected Spending (Current Period)	2024-25 Spending vs. Allocation	2025-26 Allocation Period Projected Spending (Upcoming Period)	2025-26 Spending vs. Allocation	Total Projected Shortfall Thru Upcoming Budget Funding Period with Flat CCAP Funding
Albany	$12,350,617	$11,686,687	$14,183,760	$5,179,970	$15,539,910	$16,271,320	($3,920,703)	$18,486,861	($6,136,244)	($10,056,947)
Allegany	$1,216,820	$586,064	$1,002,658	$466,653	$1,399,959	$1,495,857	($279,037)	$1,912,101	($695,281)	($974,318)
Broome	$12,030,420	$8,157,109	$10,432,030	$3,703,806	$11,111,418	$12,173,406	($142,986)	$14,454,557	($2,424,137)	($2,567,123)
Cattaraugus	$4,062,283	$2,827,547	$3,581,401	$1,289,042	$3,867,126	$4,258,054	($195,771)	$5,094,841	($1,032,558)	($1,228,329)
Cayuga	$2,585,684	$2,082,222	$2,555,378	*$725,846*	$2,903,384	$3,112,458	($526,774)	$3,647,881	($1,062,197)	($1,588,971)
Chautauqua	$8,875,687	$5,762,586	$7,559,959	$2,610,269	$7,830,807	$8,421,666	$454,021	$9,766,400	($890,713)	($436,693)
Chemung	$3,442,707	$3,399,900	$4,975,311	*$1,424,278*	$5,697,112	$6,379,561	($2,936,854)	$7,920,544	($4,477,837)	($7,414,691)
Chenango	$929,906	$715,782	$1,007,355	*$296,182*	$1,184,728	$1,310,238	($380,332)	$1,617,259	($687,353)	($1,067,685)
Clinton	$3,324,339	$2,079,142	$2,987,458	$1,009,374	$3,028,122	$3,491,677	($167,338)	$4,345,381	($1,021,042)	($1,188,380)
Columbia	$1,228,943	$1,323,956	$1,696,585	$681,437	$2,044,311	$2,136,051	($907,108)	$2,512,675	($1,283,732)	($2,190,840)
Cortland	$2,470,229	$1,246,112	$1,899,887	$780,070	$2,340,210	$2,547,872	($77,643)	$3,190,094	($719,865)	($797,509)
Delaware	$1,856,192	$1,484,534	$1,951,887	$888,181	$2,664,543	$2,749,734	($893,542)	$3,313,957	($1,457,765)	($2,351,307)
Dutchess	$12,842,473	$8,583,087	$10,982,964	$4,119,589	$12,358,767	$13,262,185	($419,712)	$15,693,287	($2,850,814)	($3,270,526)
Erie	$67,227,433	$44,212,082	$57,057,763	$21,150,159	$63,450,477	$69,449,469	($2,222,036)	$83,550,771	($16,323,338)	($18,545,375)
Essex	$1,008,612	$617,759	$898,204	$399,216	$1,197,648	$1,287,075	($278,463)	$1,615,675	($607,063)	($885,526)
Franklin	$1,948,408	$1,306,636	$2,088,393	$926,059	$2,778,177	$2,996,764	($1,048,356)	$3,802,815	($1,854,407)	($2,902,763)
Fulton	$1,531,758	$748,620	$1,003,894	$409,134	$1,227,402	$1,370,225	$161,533	$1,727,867	($196,109)	($34,576)
Genesee	$1,762,954	$1,086,072	$1,966,595	$712,852	$2,138,556	$2,545,087	($782,133)	$3,378,664	($1,615,710)	($2,397,844)
Greene	$494,206	$496,689	$632,848	$261,258	$783,774	$789,536	($295,330)	$901,506	($407,300)	($702,630)

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Hamilton	$166,124	$15,713	$80,519	*$40,427*	$161,708	$152,046	$14,078	$200,209	($34,085)	($20,007)
Herkimer	$2,230,192	$1,239,669	$1,828,344	$846,269	$2,538,807	$2,658,047	($427,855)	$3,295,511	($1,065,319)	($1,493,174)
Jefferson	$5,816,812	$2,987,335	$4,716,418	$2,033,900	$6,101,700	$6,566,851	($750,039)	$8,258,396	($2,441,584)	($3,191,623)
Lewis	$786,642	$374,819	$676,992	$273,009	$819,027	$924,267	($137,625)	$1,204,168	($417,526)	($555,151)
Livingston	$3,295,332	$2,327,249	$3,148,566	$1,112,699	$3,338,097	$3,673,234	($377,902)	$4,405,889	($1,110,557)	($1,488,459)
Madison	$2,710,015	$1,617,838	$2,196,036	$956,990	$2,870,970	$3,022,891	($312,876)	$3,684,516	($974,501)	($1,287,377)
Monroe	$94,461,426	$59,541,566	$77,113,507	$27,913,824	$83,741,472	$90,443,302	$4,018,124	$106,719,045	($12,257,619)	($8,239,495)
Montgomery	$4,189,875	$2,354,217	$3,322,409	$1,283,743	$3,851,229	$4,274,819	($84,944)	$5,321,947	($1,132,072)	($1,217,016)
Nassau	$131,580,539	$85,142,826	$100,865,207	$45,528,932	$136,586,796	$135,397,370	($3,816,831)	$154,565,173	($22,984,634)	($26,801,465)
Niagara	$11,678,793	$6,286,950	$9,421,193	$3,758,939	$11,276,817	$12,456,547	($777,754)	$15,473,219	($3,794,426)	($4,572,180)
Oneida	$17,315,586	$10,486,377	$13,931,871	$5,223,144	$15,669,432	$16,958,550	$357,036	$20,325,140	($3,009,554)	($2,652,519)
Onondaga	$45,751,874	$29,381,616	$39,575,078	$15,230,374	$45,691,122	$49,686,012	($3,934,138)	$60,351,949	($14,600,075)	($18,534,213)
Ontario	$6,040,845	$2,996,361	$4,760,958	$1,891,117	$5,673,351	$6,267,393	($226,548)	$7,914,064	($1,873,219)	($2,099,767)
Orange	$13,452,955	$9,244,252	$11,857,034	*$3,602,243*	$14,408,972	$15,337,156	($1,884,201)	$18,369,087	($4,916,132)	($6,800,334)
Orleans	$751,427	$777,263	$1,230,673	$517,268	$1,551,804	$1,687,312	($935,885)	$2,128,863	($1,377,436)	($2,313,321)
Oswego	$4,512,237	$3,260,308	$4,370,029	*$1,193,963*	$4,775,852	$5,402,225	($889,988)	$6,596,327	($2,084,090)	($2,974,078)
Otsego	$1,697,162	$1,093,288	$1,703,460	$592,801	$1,778,403	$2,103,826	($406,664)	$2,718,689	($1,021,527)	($1,428,190)
Putnam	$697,080	$658,415	$1,446,317	*$407,343*	$1,629,372	$1,967,465	($1,270,385)	$2,642,312	($1,945,232)	($3,215,617)
Rensselaer	$8,753,015	$5,417,261	$7,395,827	$2,814,396	$8,443,188	$9,296,158	($543,143)	$11,403,281	($2,650,266)	($3,193,409)
Rockland	$10,126,111	$9,374,188	$13,688,682	$5,178,583	$15,535,749	$17,159,998	($7,033,887)	$21,232,479	($11,106,368)	($18,140,255)

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St Lawrence	$3,228,083	$1,908,901	$3,234,750	$1,334,270	$4,002,810	$4,507,949	($1,279,866)	$5,862,890	($2,634,807)	($3,914,673)
Saratoga	$5,877,672	$2,941,459	$4,968,927	$1,958,537	$5,875,611	$6,684,108	($806,436)	$8,676,588	($2,798,916)	($3,605,351)
Schenectady	$17,890,375	$10,996,965	$15,329,417	*$4,227,768*	$16,911,072	$19,043,950	($1,153,575)	$23,357,161	($5,466,786)	($6,620,361)
Schoharie	$589,885	$655,858	$662,310	$311,249	$933,747	$908,573	($318,688)	$1,005,799	($415,914)	($734,602)
Schuyler	$1,015,175	$638,265	$864,315	$297,739	$893,217	$1,020,278	($5,103)	$1,257,278	($242,103)	($247,207)
Seneca	$1,752,789	$880,442	$1,450,412	$589,349	$1,768,047	$1,955,931	($203,142)	$2,493,404	($740,615)	($943,756)
Steuben	$10,663,690	$4,881,282	$7,791,575	$2,261,849	$6,785,547	$8,793,267	$1,870,423	$11,684,094	($1,020,404)	$850,019
Suffolk	$75,276,561	$52,462,380	$66,834,913	$26,418,131	$79,254,393	$82,890,110	($7,613,549)	$97,073,802	($21,797,241)	($29,410,789)
Sullivan	$2,259,474	$1,742,152	$2,845,746	$1,121,498	$3,364,494	$3,814,973	($1,555,499)	$4,925,395	($2,665,921)	($4,221,420)
Tioga	$2,640,553	$1,721,309	$2,169,233	$787,658	$2,362,974	$2,581,231	$59,322	$3,071,146	($430,593)	($371,271)
Tompkins	$4,765,043	$2,677,622	$3,914,588	$1,671,384	$5,014,152	$5,224,409	($459,366)	$6,322,870	($1,557,827)	($2,017,194)
Ulster	$3,942,163	$3,562,710	$4,981,336	*$1,459,729*	$5,838,916	$6,247,587	($2,305,424)	$7,514,129	($3,571,966)	($5,877,391)
Warren	$1,034,450	$1,405,899	$1,887,034	$811,889	$2,435,667	$2,564,804	($1,530,354)	$3,112,797	($2,078,347)	($3,608,701)
Washington	$941,533	$1,027,723	$1,580,397	*$534,111*	$2,136,444	$2,299,724	($1,358,191)	$2,912,752	($1,971,219)	($3,329,410)
Wayne	$2,801,209	$1,434,943	$2,509,794	$1,130,241	$3,390,723	$3,726,802	($925,593)	$4,850,314	($2,049,105)	($2,974,697)
Westchester	$66,118,856	$45,209,660	$58,397,115	$24,246,719	$72,740,157	$77,030,484	($10,911,628)	$92,720,811	($26,601,955)	($37,513,583)
Wyoming	$1,361,374	$542,257	$983,488	*$355,689*	$1,422,756	$1,508,775	($147,401)	$1,946,514	($585,140)	($732,542)
Yates	$1,059,946	$449,546	$756,472	$331,491	$994,473	$1,056,749	$3,197	$1,326,195	($266,249)	($263,052)
Rest of State Total	**$710,422,544**	**$468,119,470**	**$612,955,272**	**$237,282,640**	**$726,115,499**	**$773,343,412**	**($62,920,868)**	**$923,857,340**	**($213,434,796)**	**($276,355,664)**

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Appendix B

Child Care Assistance Program Enrollment					
County	2022-23 Allocation Period Average Monthly Enrollment	2023-24 Allocation Period Average Monthly Enrollment	January 2025 Enrollment	2024-25 Allocation Period Projected Monthly Enrollment	2025-26 Allocation Period Projected Monthly Enrollment
Albany	928	1,045	1,152	1,170	1,294
Allegany	69	108	160	165	210
Broome	863	1,026	1,122	1,186	1,363
Cattaraugus	344	407	505	491	566
Cayuga	235	255	284	281	303
Chautauqua	621	800	846	857	1,013
Chemung	412	525	676	661	776
Chenango	102	119	169	157	183
Clinton	201	271	325	339	412
Columbia	74	110	112	124	156
Cortland	133	183	247	252	307
Delaware	133	183	253	253	308
Dutchess	683	866	1,009	1,029	1,205
Erie	3,848	4,740	5,401	5,606	6,519
Essex	57	91	126	128	165
Franklin	148	217	270	291	362
Fulton	44	64	91	87	104
Genesee	112	191	216	239	310
Greene	35	44	61	57	68
Hamilton	4	7	14	15	19
Herkimer	142	185	261	263	315
Jefferson	308	454	587	599	741
Lewis	45	78	78	96	124
Livingston	229	287	315	328	385
Madison	161	205	290	282	335
Monroe	5,625	6,441	7,113	7,282	8,104
Montgomery	212	302	338	375	462
Nassau	5,379	6,305	6,986	7,069	8,063
Niagara	503	723	962	1,036	1,298

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Oneida	1,280	1,530	1,711	1,775	2,016
Onondaga	2,852	3,554	4,130	4,325	5,059
Ontario	357	470	525	563	673
Orange	765	934	1,216	1,198	1,395
Orleans	89	124	158	160	194
Oswego	316	424	496	516	620
Otsego	81	131	171	174	225
Putnam	40	80	86	99	133
Rensselaer	530	635	674	730	833
Rockland	703	904	1,093	1,087	1,279
Saint Lawrence	210	334	451	459	590
Saratoga	348	476	571	587	707
Schenectady	1,044	1,368	1,558	1,623	1,927
Schoharie	53	48	77	66	68
Schuyler	67	84	87	98	115
Seneca	93	144	178	193	241
Steuben	558	765	984	964	1,170
Suffolk	3,043	3,970	4,712	4,834	5,823
Sullivan	146	228	264	286	367
Tioga	202	236	259	269	307
Tompkins	232	325	437	429	512
Ulster	336	396	491	481	541
Warren	125	160	227	220	263
Washington	82	145	189	208	272
Wayne	155	251	333	353	450
Westchester	2,866	3,472	4,323	4,239	4,877
Wyoming	63	104	156	155	196
Yates	46	72	99	102	128
Rest of State Total	38,327	47,595	55,625	56,911	66,455

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