



Testimony of

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New York State Assembly Legislative Taskforce on Women's Issues

Regarding the
Access to Quality Child Care

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Good morning. My name is Stephanie Gendell and I am the Associate Executive Director for Policy and Advocacy at Citizens' Committee for Children (CCC). CCC is a 73-year-old privately supported, independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe.

I would like to thank Chairs Avella, Jaffee and Mayer, all of the members of the Senate and Assembly Children and Families Committees and the Assembly Legislative Taskforce on Women's Issues for holding today's hearing on access to quality child care. We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony on the barriers to accessing quality child care and how such lack of access relates to a variety of issues including child development, family stability and the economy. We also look forward to working with our Senate and Assembly partners to strengthen the early childhood education system throughout the State.

This year, like many others, CCC advocated was advocating for the State to increase its investment in child care. Despite the fact that only 17% of income eligible children in New York State are enrolled in early childhood programs, the state and counties need additional funding to implement federal law changes, and the state only invests a minimal amount of State General Funds in child care, the Governor proposed swapping out \$27 million of state general funds for \$27 million of TANF funds that had been supporting other social services- notably senior centers.

Much of our advocacy and the advocacy of our colleagues to urge the State to invest more in child care got diverted to trying to keep child care whole. That said, CCC is very grateful to the legislators who stood up for child care in the final days of the budget negotiations. We know that it is because of you that \$20 million was restored and the child care cut was "only" \$7 million. We know that you understand the need to better support child care statewide and that that is why you are holding today's hearing. We are grateful for your support and hope that we can use this step in the wrong direction as a springboard to move New York to a better place with increased investments in child care.

Benefits of Early Childhood Education

As former Chair of the Federal Reserve Bank, Ben Bernake, said in 2012, "economically speaking, early childhood education programs are a good investment, with inflation-adjusted annual rates of return on the funds to these programs estimated to reach 10 percent or higher. Very few alternative investments can promise that kind of return. Notably, a portion of these economic returns accrues to the children themselves and their families, but studies show the rest of society enjoys the majority of the benefits, reflecting the many contributions skilled and productive workers make to the economy."

Access to high quality early childhood education is essential for alleviating poverty; both because it enables parents to work and because it helps low-income children be on a level playing field with their peers when they get to kindergarten. Access to quality child care is

important to a child's safety, growth, and social and academic development, especially for low-income children.¹

Child care enables low-income working parents to participate in the workforce and obtain economic security for their families. Unlike many other programs, child care provides full day and summer care. A 2013 survey of over 5,700 working parents of NYC children in child care and after-school programs found that 95% of the surveyed parents reported that they relied on child care and/or after-school programs to be able to work.² In a 2012 survey of NYC parents at risk of losing their child care and/or after-school program, 50% of the surveyed parents reported that they would have to quit their job if they lost child care.³

According to the 2014 Census, New York State had some of the highest levels of child poverty in the country. There are 1.2 million children under the age of 5 in New York State.⁴ Over 270,000 of these children (278,542), or 23.8%, were living in poverty.⁵ Buffalo ranked third highest among cities with populations greater than 245,000 in percentage of children living in poverty, with 47.3% of Buffalo children living in poverty.⁶ The poverty rate in Syracuse for 2014 was 34.4 percent, making it the 16th poorest city among 585 cities in the U.S. with populations greater than 65,000. Rochester was not far behind, with a poverty rate of 33.8%. Notably, over half of the children in Syracuse and Rochester were living in poverty in 2014, with rates of child poverty at 50.2% and 56% respectively.⁷ In New York City, nearly a third of all children live in poverty.⁸

Child care is also a critical component of economic growth in the state. Not only are parents able to work, but the early childhood field employs thousands of providers, many of whom operate small businesses out of their homes.

¹ Barnett, W. S. (2008). Preschool education and its lasting effects: Research and policy implications. Boulder and Tempe: Education and the Public Interest Center & Education

Policy Research Unit. <http://epicpolicy.org/publication/preschooleducation>

² Campaign for Children. (2013). Cuts to Child Care and After-School Will Force Parents Out of the Workforce.

http://www.campaignforchildrennyc.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Campaign-For-Children_Jobs-Report-Final-Designed.pdf.

³ Campaign for Children. (2012, May 24). What Will You Do if the City Closes Your Child's Child Care or After-School Program? <http://www.campaignforchildrennyc.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/NYC-Parent-Voices.pdf>.

⁴ United States Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, September 2015.

http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_14_5YR_DP05&src=pt

⁵ United States Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, September 2015.

http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_14_1YR_B17001&prodType=table

⁶ United States Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey, September 2015.

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/news/data-releases/2014/release.html>

⁷ American Community Survey, American Fact Finder, September 2015,

http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_14_1YR_S1701&prodType=table.2.

⁸ Citizens' Committee for Children. Keeping Track. 2016.

Critical Need for Investment in Child Care

Despite the benefits of child care, statewide only 17% of the income eligible children ages 0-5 are able to be enrolled. In New York City, only 14% of income eligible infants and toddlers receive child care.

Furthermore, when the federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) was reauthorized in 2014, it included several new requirements, many of which are focused on child safety, such as background checks and training for informal child care providers. Last year, the state estimated this cost to be about \$90 million and sought a three-year federal waiver to delay implementation. The State received a one-year waiver for most of its requests. This waiver is due to expire this fiscal year and the State is now estimating a cost of \$56 million. How the new federal administration will handle another waiver request or a waiver extension is a very large unknown.

It is essential that that State invest needed resources to implement the federal law and that there not be any cuts that impact the amount of subsidies for children or creates costs to providers. The economic well-being of New York State requires that we do not take a huge step backwards with regard to child care. One estimate is that over 22,000 children could lose child care if the federal regulations are implemented without additional resources for child care.

New Yorkers want an increased investment in child care

CCC commissioned a poll, conducted by Global Strategies Group, of 800 New York City residents from April 6-10, 2017, which showed that the overwhelming majority of New Yorkers who are likely to vote in the upcoming election wanted to see increased funding for high-quality early childhood programs (and after-school and summer programs.)

Specifically, 87% of general election voters and 92% of Democratic primary voters support expanding access to free and reduced price child care. This support continued with 64% of general election voters continuing to support expansion when told that their own taxes might have to be increased to fund the programs. This was true for voters in all income brackets.

In addition, the high cost of raising a family was a major source of stress for working parents with 83% of general election voters saying the cost of child care is a major financial burden for NYC's working parents and 76% saying they worry about the cost of raising a family in the city. Fifty-five percent of the parents polled said that they worry about missing or falling behind at work due to a lack of affordable child care.

New York City residents also understood the importance of child care and early education programs to children and their families. 91% of general election voters agreed that ensuring parents have access to child care is critical to their job stability and 88% agreed that investing in child care, pre-k, after-school and summer programs impacts achievement outcomes for children.

A powerpoint presentation with more details about the poll results can be found at this link:
https://www.ccnnyork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/CCC-GlobalStrategyGroup_IssuesPoll2017.pdf

Conclusion:

New Yorkers both want and need a greater State investment in child care programs. We are so grateful to the Senate and Assembly leaders who are making support for child care a priority in New York State. We look forward to working together in the coming months to make sure that the next state budget includes investments in child care to expand subsidies and capacity statewide and fund the implementation of the new CCDBG requirements.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.