

## Winning Beginning New York State Executive Agenda 2018-19



In FY 2018-2019, New York State must make the investments to build comprehensive high-quality systems to provide early care and education to young children in every community in New York State. These investments:

- Support New York's workforce
- Prepare children for success in school and life and improve educational outcomes
- Build the Empire State economy and help working families enter and stay in the middle class
- Decrease child abuse and neglect
- Increase health outcomes

The Winning Beginning NY Agenda lays out a path towards a strategic, systems-building approach that will ensure New York's children and families have access to the effective, quality services they need and deserve.

**Winning Beginning NY** is New York's statewide coalition working to inform policymakers and the public about the many benefits of early care and learning for children from the prenatal period through age eight. Our priorities include high-quality afterschool, child care, early intervention, home visiting, and pre-K. The coalition aims to build a broad-based constituency to make investments in quality early care and learning a top public priority.

## Child Care



Child care is an essential workplace support. Working families earning up to 200% of federal poverty guidelines are eligible for financial assistance to help cover the cost of care. Because there is not enough funding in the Child Care Block Grant from either the State or Federal government, most counties can provide child care subsidies to less than one out of every five children who qualify. This crisis is a structural problem that requires solutions outside the scope of minimum wage increases. **While a long-term strategy is needed, an immediate crisis looms given last year's \$7 million cut to child care subsidies and new minimum wage standards.**

### ***I. Increase Access to Quality Care***

A 2017 study by Child Care Aware identified New York State as the second most expensive State in the nation for a family to afford child care and estimated that a single parent would have to spend 45% of his or her income on child care. New York must fill the gap for low-income working families. Winning Beginning NY proposes that New York State adopt a three-pronged approach to easing the burden on low-income working parents and to stimulate workforce and economic development:

1. Use economic development funds to expand access to quality child care for low income families that cannot afford child care in order to remove barriers to broad workforce participation, support worker productivity, and bolster the local child care industry;
2. Create a dedicated fund that will allow local governments that have exhausted their child care funding allocations to apply for the dedicated funds to serve all eligible low-income working families;
3. Expand the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit.

As we begin 2018 with Paid Family Leave, New York is now a national leader mandating eight weeks of paid leave that give parents the opportunity to bond with their children during those crucial first two months. However, after parents return to work they are often in a bind, faced with child care costs that they cannot afford. By supporting local government through subsidies and more substantial tax credits, New York can ensure that parents can stay working while their children are learning and growing.

### ***II. Address the Impact of the Minimum Wage Hike on Providers***

Center directors and home-based providers report that increased operating costs may force them to close, leaving New York's families with few or no options to access quality child care programs. New York has an opportunity this year to mitigate the immediate crisis and to begin exploring an innovative approach to the structural problem.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Re-instate the 75th percentile formula to establish reimbursement rates expected to change in June 2018. Reimbursement rates have been essentially flat funded since 2015; and
2. Develop a fund and mechanism to assist child care centers and group family day care providers serving children receiving child care subsidies to cover increased wage costs as the new minimum wage standard is implemented across the State.

# Pre-Kindergarten

## **Keep the Promise of Quality Pre-K for all New York's Children**

Nearly 90,000 4-year-olds outside of New York City are still without full-day pre-K services, even in districts that are willing and eager to add these services as soon as the state makes good on the commitment to fund the program. Changing demographics across the State, especially rising poverty and the growing numbers of English Language Learners, in small cities, suburbs and rural areas, make this investment an imperative to put children on a path to success in school and life. Districts also need increased support for implementation of a quality program and the resources to eliminate barriers to expansion. Keep the promise of quality pre-k for all New York children by supporting the following **recommendations**:

### **Invest at least \$150 million to ensure children outside of New York City have access to quality full-day programs**

Open the program to any district ready with a plan to meet the needs of and prioritize at-risk children in their communities. That investment should include:

- ***\$125 million to expand access to pre-K full-day and part-day for both three- and four-year-olds.*** Funding levels should be sufficient to assure quality in all settings, appropriating at least \$10,000 for four-year-olds and \$12,000 for three-year-olds to support quality standards known to produce better educational outcomes for children.
- ***\$25 million in supplemental funding to enhance quality and eliminate barriers to expansion, as districts expand pre-K.*** The pre-K program has established high regulatory standards, but the State has not invested sufficiently in necessary infrastructure and quality strategies as pre-K expands. ***The Governor's Statewide Universal Full-Day Pre-K program, up for renewal this year, established an important strategy to address this need, with the inclusion of supplemental funding for expansion.*** The 2018 investment should include supplemental funding for two critical purposes: (1) Evidence-based strategies to attract, retain and support qualified teachers in all settings, including improved compensation as well as professional development, coaching and mentoring; and (2) Funding for other essentials of implementation, including technical assistance and start-up funding to equip new classrooms and to cover transportation costs.

### ***Protect and Build on the State's Current \$822 Million Investment in Pre-K***

Ensure the \$340 million grant, which supports New York City's Pre-K for All program and programs in 52 districts outside of New York City is renewed.

Provide State dollars for the program and services currently supported by the Federal Preschool Development Grant that ends in December 2018.

The \$340 million Statewide Universal Full-Day Pre-K program, which supports services for more than 70,000 four-year-olds in New York City's Pre-K for All program – and 5,000 more four-year-olds in 52 school districts outside New York City – must be renewed and made permanent. This funding is the cornerstone of the Governor's promise to make quality full-day pre-K truly universal in our state.

- Keep the commitment made in the 2017 State budget to invest State funds to continue full-day pre-K services for 2500 children currently supported by the Preschool Development Grant when it expires in the 2018-19 school year.

#### ***I. Reform pre-K Financing***

State leaders should continue to move toward a single pre-K program, with funding distributed by an allocation aid formula, like other education funding, to put the State on a path toward sustainable, predictable financing for pre-K. The aid should be appropriate to support qualified, appropriately compensated teachers in all settings and also appropriate to meet the needs of each child, including children with developmental delays and disabilities, multi-

lingual learners, and children who are homeless. In addition, it is imperative that pre-K funding includes aid for transportation as well as other essentials, like other public education programs.

**II. Include Appropriate Investment in K-12 Aid**

To ensure pre-K is followed by a continuum of quality educational services that prepare children for college and careers, the K-12 public school system needs to have an adequate and appropriate investment.

**III. Strengthen Partnerships and Support for Community Programs to Provide pre-K Services**

The State has wisely chosen to deliver pre-K services through a mixed delivery system that includes child care programs in the community. Today, more than half of all pre-K services are offered in community settings, a strategy that leverages existing resources and better serves the State’s working families who often need extended hours and year-round care. Some of these programs offer the expertise and capacity to create integrated settings, so children with disabilities and typically developing children can learn together and from each other. Other community-based programs have experience and expertise supporting children and families whose primary language is a language other than English. The State should offer more support to community partners with the capacity to offer integrated classrooms, support for multi-lingual learners, and developmentally-appropriate programs for three-year-olds. Many also serve infants and toddlers, creating capacity for stable, continuous care and learning experiences that experts say can most benefit young children, improve educational outcomes and support the State’s goal to create a continuum of early childhood education, birth to third grade.



## Early Intervention

New York State must **restore Early Intervention (EI) reimbursement rates by at least 5%** so that young children can receive high-quality services from qualified professionals.

### *New York's Need and Capacity*

Early Intervention provides evaluations and services to infants and toddlers with significant developmental delays or disabilities and their families.

The State has decreased its investment in EI by *one-quarter* since 2010. Instead of providing cost-of-living increases, the State cut the EI service rate for home- and community-based services by 10% in April 2010 and cut the reimbursement rate for all EI services by an additional 5% in April 2011. Meanwhile, the State implemented a new process for seeking reimbursement, placing significant administrative burdens on EI service coordinators and programs.

As a result, experienced, high-quality EI providers have shut their doors or stopped taking EI cases, making it difficult for children to access much-needed high-quality services in a timely manner in certain areas. Many providers have had to pull highly qualified therapists from serving children directly to manage the added overhead tasks, without commensurate reimbursement, and with fewer hours to plan for and offer services to children.

The shortages have impacted children in urban, suburban, and rural communities. For example:

- In Franklin County, an established agency shut down its EI program in June 2016 due to inadequate reimbursement rates, leaving dozens of children and families without services.
- In New York City, in June 2017, an agency that was providing EI service coordination to 2,400 children ended its 24-year EI program because the program was not financially viable. Meanwhile, between 2012 and 2015, the number of contacts to the New York City EI office regarding the inability to find EI providers for children increased by 910%.

### **Recommendation:**

1. We urge the State to begin restoring reimbursement rates by increasing the current rates by at least 5% this year. Restoring reimbursement rates is necessary to ensure that children can receive high-quality EI services at the time when intervention is most effective.

## Home Visiting

Home visiting programs are voluntary programs where trained professionals visit at-risk mothers before and after birth. Programs have shown impressive results in increasing the stability, safety, health and learning for both children and parents – while reducing short- and long-term use of costly services. Winning Beginning NY urges New York to consider the following **recommendations**:

- Increase the State investment in Nurse Family Partnership to \$5 million
- Increase the State Investment in the Parent-Child Home Program by \$2 million
- Maintain \$23.3 million for Healthy Families New York
- Furthermore, these three programs, together with Parents as Teachers (PAT), request funding to create the position of a statewide orientation/training coordinator to improve collective support of families and improve staff retention/program capacity.

## Afterschool Programs



High-quality afterschool, summer, and expanded learning opportunities are critical to New York State's efforts to prepare all children for college or career. By increasing investments in afterschool, summer, and expanded learning opportunities, New York State can continue to play a key role in providing necessary support for working families and their children.

### **Recommendations**

#### ***I. Provide Funding for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers***

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center initiative is a federally funded program that currently provides \$88.5 million to New York State to support quality afterschool and summer programs for over 55,000 students. Due to the uncertainty of funding at the federal level, New York State must ensure no loss of programming to students currently enrolled in 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs by providing funding to make up for any cuts made to the program in the FY18 federal budget.

#### ***II. Restore Funding to the Advantage After-School Program***

Restore Advantage After School by \$2.5 million to the FY16-17 appropriation level of \$22.3 million. If funding is not restored to the FY16-17 level, the next round of Advantage After School will serve an estimated 1,800 less students.

#### ***III. Sustain the Empire State After-School Program (ESAP)***

The \$35 million for afterschool and summer programs that was included in the FY17-18 final budget is a necessary investment and a clear display of confidence in the effectiveness of these programs:

- Maintain level funding of \$35 million for FY18-19
- Open eligibility up to community based organizations (CBO's) who would serve students from the school districts that are eligible for funding. If eligibility is not opened up to CBO's, require school districts to partner with a CBO in the delivery of the program.
  - If a school district does not have a CBO in the immediate area, they can apply for exemption from this requirement.
- Appropriate dedicated funds to provide meaningful implementation support and technical assistance to afterschool and summer programs.
  - \$1.75 million, equal to 5% of the total allocation for ESAP, should be made available for technical assistance and implementation support to programs.

#### ***IV. Invest in an Expanded Learning Opportunities Data System for New York***

Invest \$1.2 million in the acquisition of a data system for tracking participant outcomes from expanded learning opportunities (ELOs). This system would support afterschool, summer, expanded learning time, community schools, and other models that offer youth safety, learning, and enrichment beyond traditional school hours. The Network estimates initial costs at approximately \$1.2 million and subsequent annual costs at approximately \$400,000. A data system would help support growth in program quality, simplify data collection and analysis for program providers, and inform New York State policymaking.

For more information, please contact the individuals listed below:

**General Issues:** Gregory Brender, [gbrender@unhny.org](mailto:gbrender@unhny.org) or (212) 967-0322 ext. 330

**Child Care:** Susan Antos [SAntos@empirejustice.org](mailto:SAntos@empirejustice.org) and Jessica Klos [JKlos@earlycareandlearning.org](mailto:JKlos@earlycareandlearning.org)

**Pre-K:** Betty Holcomb: [bholcomb@centerforchildrensinitiatives.org](mailto:bholcomb@centerforchildrensinitiatives.org)

**Early Intervention:** Randi Levine: [rlevine@advocatesforchildren.org](mailto:rlevine@advocatesforchildren.org)

**Home Visiting:** Jenn O'Connor: [jconnor@preventchildabuseny.org](mailto:jconnor@preventchildabuseny.org)

**After-School:** Chris Neitzey [chris@networkforyouthsuccess.org](mailto:chris@networkforyouthsuccess.org)



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*an early care and learning coalition*