



RAISING NEW YORK

Supported families. Thriving children. A stronger New York.

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Poll: Voters say strengthening early childhood is among top issues for NY to address, want state to do more to support infants and toddlers

New coalition of parent, early childhood, education, civil rights, business, and health organizations aims to increase the number of children who are on track for school readiness

NEW YORK – A new poll reveals that likely voters rank strengthening education and child care for all New Yorkers as among the top priorities for the state to address, with 85% saying they support the state investing more public funds to expand access to high-quality, affordable child care.

The poll results — which point to the urgency of increasing early childhood investment and the intense voter support for the state to act — were released today by Raising NY, a new coalition of parent, early childhood, education, civil rights, business, and health organizations. Raising NY is dedicated to increasing the number of young children who are on track for school readiness, which can strengthen New York's schools, improve children's futures, and reduce juvenile incarceration rates.

New York has more than 700,000 children under the age of three, a period of life when 80% of a child's brain development occurs. But statewide, hundreds of thousands of families are prevented from accessing the high-quality programs, services, and opportunities they need to raise healthy and thriving children.

Raising NY is focused on advancing policies that support families of infants and toddlers during these first critical years of life. The coalition's priorities are:

- **Improving access to health and developmental care.** Poll results show that 73% of likely voters feel that New York should be doing more to ensure access to specific programs, especially early interventions such as screening programs and services for children with developmental delays.

- **Improving access to high-quality, affordable child care.** Poll results show that 60% of likely voters feel the lack of affordable, high-quality child care is a major obstacle holding children back from entering school prepared to learn. A majority of parents with children 5 or younger reported that they have had to leave work early (57%), miss work (58%), or arrive to work late (52%) as a result of child care issues.
- **Helping more parents become financially secure.** Poll results show that more than 3 in 4 likely voters (78%) indicated that providing more tax credits for child care to parents of infants and toddlers who are low-income and increasing access to adult and higher education programs for parents of infants and toddlers would each be somewhat or very helpful.
- **Developing a system that works together for families.** Poll results show that 81% of likely voters feel that better coordination between early development, child care, and health care programs would be somewhat helpful and 46% feel it would be very helpful. Parents with young children felt even stronger about the importance of this issue, with 84% reporting that better coordination would be somewhat helpful and 55% very helpful.

More information about Raising NY's policy agenda, along with additional poll results, can be found at www.RaisingNY.org. Read the poll memo [here](#).

Raising NY is led by a steering committee that includes Advocates for Children of New York, The Business Council of New York State, Center for Children's Initiatives, The Children's Agenda, The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, CUNY Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, Docs For Tots, Early Care & Learning Council, The Education Trust–New York, The New York Immigration Coalition, Prevent Child Abuse New York, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, United Way of Buffalo & Erie County, and United Way of New York City.

The coalition is co-chaired by **Melodie Baker, chair of the Erie/Niagara Birth to 8 Coalition and director of education at United Way of Buffalo & Erie County; Kate Breslin, president and chief executive officer of the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy; and Heather C. Briccetti, Esq., president and chief executive officer of The Business Council of New York State**, and is staffed by The Education Trust–New York.

“Even with decades of research on early brain development and the importance of the first five years of life for a child, families with young children in New York State still lack basic societal supports like accessible health care and high-quality child development programming,” **Baker said**. “The defining factor of a healthy society is its ability to stimulate prosperity and stability among its most vulnerable populations. Access to health care, quality education, and economic sustainability is a right, not a privilege.”

“The evidence is clear: the first several years of a child's life represent a time of immense opportunity—and threat,” **Breslin said**. “During this brief period, a child's brain and body develop at a breakneck pace, making young children uniquely vulnerable to the negative impacts of poverty, poor nutrition, housing instability, and trauma. At the same time, investments in proven approaches, like tax credits for families, high quality child care, health care, home visiting, and early intervention, can transform a child's life. We are thrilled to be working with Raising NY's broad coalition to ensure that investing in our youngest children becomes one of New York's top priorities.”

“Our current education system is more effective with children who are prepared to enter it,” **Briccetti said**. “For those who have not had access to early childhood education, we see devastating statistics

that they're less likely to be on grade level for reading by the third grade, which in turn makes them less likely to graduate high school and more at risk to enter the criminal justice system. As a former public defender, I have seen this outcome first-hand. The state has a tremendous opportunity to better prepare children to enter the education system when their brain development is at a crucial period."

"Our work with Raising NY reflects The Education Trust–New York's commitment to equity and educational justice, beginning with the state's youngest children," **said Hope Lesane, associate director for early childhood for The Education Trust–New York.** "Parents of young children want state leaders to act with urgency to increase investment in high-quality programs and services for infants and toddlers during this critical moment of their lives, and we are proud to partner with organizations that have long been champions for policies that give all young children and their families the resources and support they need to reach their full potential."

"We are excited to be a part of this coalition and look forward to working together so that New York can better support young children, including children with developmental delays and disabilities," **said Kim Sweet, executive director of Advocates for Children of New York.**

"New York families face a critical shortage of affordable high-quality child care and other supportive services for their babies and toddlers," **said Betty Holcomb, Policy Director for the Center for Children's Initiatives.** "The time is now to provide every child with the opportunities to grow and learn. Raising NY will work to promote effective policies and new investments to meet that goal."

"State policy and funding streams are absolutely critical to the successful development of infants and toddlers in the greater Rochester area," **said Larry Marx, chief executive officer of The Children's Agenda.** "We are thrilled to partner with organizations across the state in Raising NY to make a powerful difference improving the health and education of our youngest children."

"Every child, regardless of their race, ethnicity, home language, income, or zip code, deserves access to high quality and holistic structures of care from birth," **said Ramon Peguero, Esq., president and chief executive officer of the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families.** "The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families is excited to join Raising NY in an effort to ensure that every New York family with infants and toddlers is surrounded by and has meaningful access to culturally responsive systems of support that are equitable and consistently invested in at levels that bolster healthy development for every child."

"A state should be measured by how it cares for its youngest and most vulnerable citizens," **said Sherry Cleary, executive director of CUNY Professional Development Institute.** "Raising NY enables deep analysis and action to ensure that New York is the best place to raise a family. I am honored to be a part of the work."

"New York families with young children collectively represent the future prosperity of our communities," **said Dr. Liz Izakson, executive director of Docs for Tots.** "Right now, the supports for infants and toddlers are patchy and uneven, necessitating a more accessible and integrated approach to services and programs. Docs for Tots, through our Help Me Grow-Long Island partnership, has been working on these very issues locally. We are proud to join Raising NY to work together for system change that leads to positive outcomes for all New York families."

“Our 35 Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies and our strong statewide network of Infant Toddler Specialists are committed to connecting families to quality early childhood services and improving the quality of child care options that exist,” **said Meredith Menzies Chimento, executive director of the Early Care & Learning Council.** “The CCR&Rs are on the front lines, providing direct assistance and support to parents, child care providers, and employers in their communities. Working with the partners in the Raising NY coalition will ensure children and families receive more comprehensive services that will support their growth and future success.”

“This poll confirms what we have always known is true: New Yorkers care deeply about ensuring the success of all children across the state,” **said Kim Sykes, director of education policy at the New York Immigration Coalition.** “That’s why we’re excited to work with the Raising NY initiative to bring more attention to home visiting programs, which offer invaluable health and parenting support to New York’s immigrant families at the earliest stages of a child’s life. These programs provide unparalleled support to women as early as their first few weeks of pregnancy, and help parents to build a healthy, safe environment for their children to grow and flourish.”

“While New York State has several dynamic maternal, infant, and early childhood home visiting programs, there is no true system of coordinated services,” **said Tim Hathaway, executive director of Prevent Child Abuse New York.** “Our current patchwork therefore serves just a small percentage of eligible children. New York State must expand access to existing research-based programs while instituting a system of universal home visiting, thereby providing every family with a newborn or adopted baby a ‘light touch’ voluntary visit. Prevent Child Abuse New York and the New York State Home Visiting Coordination Initiative are proud to stand with Raising NY and our partners in working toward this outcome.”

“The value of investing in high-quality early childhood programming cannot be overstated,” **said Michael Weiner, president and chief executive officer of United Way of Buffalo & Erie County.** “United Way of Buffalo & Erie County recently realigned our efforts to support families with young children based on research which states that allocating resources earlier in a child’s life will improve education, health, and social outcomes mitigating barriers to success later in life.”

“Early childhood learning experiences are critical in preparing children for school and putting them on a path to academic success, college, and career,” **said Sheena Wright, president and chief executive officer of United Way of New York City.** “Of equal import is access to stable, full-day child care, which enables parents to work, attend school, or pursue training opportunities, and can move an entire family along the path to financial stability which is the cornerstone of self-sufficiency. This dual generation approach — children and their parents — is the only way to move the needle farther, faster.”

Raising NY is made possible thanks to the support of funders including the Pritzker Children’s Initiative and Early Childhood Partners NYC.

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About Raising NY

Raising NY is a diverse statewide coalition of parent, early childhood, education, civil rights, business, and health organizations dedicated to increasing the number of children who are on track for school readiness. Learn more at RaisingNY.org.