

Advancing Equity for Our Youngest New Yorkers: Statement of Principles for Child Care Expansion

New York's child care system is facing an unprecedented crisis.

Even at a moment when access to child care is essential to the state's economic recovery, many communities, particularly communities that have been historically underserved and that shouldered a disproportionate impact of the coronavirus pandemic, lack access to high-quality, affordable child care for infants and toddlers.

The disparate impact of the pandemic also took its toll on the child care workforce, as child care providers are frequently women-owned businesses and many early childhood educators are women of color. The median hourly pay is just \$12, less than 98 percent of occupations.¹ Child care providers cannot compete by offering higher wages without raising tuition, which will ultimately raise the cost of care far above levels that families are already struggling to afford.

In a statewide poll conducted during the pandemic, a majority of New York State businesses reported that the lack of access to

high-quality child care for infants and toddlers negatively impacted their business, something that underscores the importance of high-quality child care to New York's long-term economic recovery.

It is clear that immediate, transformative action is required to rebuild our child care system.

As New York State and the federal government consider various proposals, the Raising NY coalition calls on leaders to adopt these four key principles to ensure that equity is the cornerstone of any new child care policy:



Quality must go hand-in-hand with support and expansion.

High-quality, safe, and culturally responsive child care must be part of any effort to expand child care equitably. To ensure that families of color and families from low-income backgrounds have equitable access to quality care, child care expansion plans must also support a universal, transparent quality rating and improvement system.



Historically underserved families must be first-in-line for any new support.

Children and families from historically underserved communities must be prioritized in order to effectively address systemic inequities in our child care system. Policies related to expanded subsidies, new quality measures, and other supports must prioritize funding to families of color and families from low-income backgrounds, including being first in line for any phase-in timeline.

In order to ensure that high-quality child care is truly accessible to all New York families including immigrant families; families involved in the child welfare system; families experiencing homelessness; parents/children with disabilities; parents experiencing unemployment; and foster families must be able to access child care without the obstacles created by work and immigration status requirements or other barriers that result in a denial of care. Providers must also receive the resources and support needed to meet the needs of children with disabilities.



Infants and toddlers must be a priority.

Serving infants and toddlers is — by necessity — the most expensive and staff-intensive care for providers to offer. It is also essential for families — facilitating workforce participation for parents while ensuring that their children are in a safe, stimulating environment that nurtures child development. This second point cannot be overstated, as extensive research shows that the first three years of a child's life are a critical, formative period that can lay the foundation for a lifelong love of learning and support the best possible outcomes throughout their lives.



Support the child care workforce that has helped keep New York going throughout the coronavirus crisis.

The professionals who care for infants and toddlers in New York have been greatly affected by job loss or reduced wages, which are often at or below the minimum wage and are not tailored to education level or years of experience. Policies must ensure that all children have access to highly qualified, well-compensated, and diverse early childhood educators. Persistently low early childhood compensation leads to high turnover, which can undermine quality because young children thrive when they are cared for by a familiar, trusted educator.

¹<https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes399011.htm>

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