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A RECOVERY FOR ALL OF US: CITY TO EXPAND CHILD CARE FOR WORKING FAMILIES

Proposal could expand child care access to 15,000 high need children

NEW YORK—Mayor de Blasio today announced an initiative to expand low-cost and free child care for thousands of families across New York City. Through the passage of State legislation that would raise the qualifying income threshold for subsidized child care and extend full-time child care support to families who work part-time, the City could expand child care access to an additional 15,000 high-need children.

"Red tape can't get in the way of our city's recovery," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "To really bring our city back, we need our State partners to step up and help more working families qualify for childcare. Together we can beat back COVID and create a stronger and fairer city."

"We must put families, and most importantly our children, at the center of our recovery," said **Melanie Hartzog, Deputy Mayor of Health and Human Services**. "There is no better way to do that than to expand child care access and stabilize the child care sector. Quality early education and care is something every child deserves, and is a proven investment in our future. The need is urgent and we must respond."

The Administration has invested significantly in child care and early childhood education through signature programs such as 3k and Pre-K, but the city is seeking to serve even more families and support the child care sector. Many families across the city are struggling with job, economic, health and housing instability, and enabling them to access child care is a critical step towards recovery from the pandemic.

To start, the City is supporting legislation sponsored by Assembly member Hevesi and State Senator Brisport that could expand child care access to an additional 15,000 children at minimum by:

- Enabling NYC to raise the income threshold to 70,000 for a family of four to help more working families qualify for subsidized child care.

- Providing full-time child care to people who work 20 hours a week or more. Under current state law, qualified families only receive child care for the hours they work.

In addition, New York State has received, but not yet distributed more than \$2 billion in federal stimulus money, which would help further expand child care for working families citywide as part of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding, coupled with additional state and federal flexibility, could expand child care access to thousands more families, and provide workforce supports, capacity building and other supports for the child care providers that have provided invaluable care to our children throughout the pandemic. New York City has just submitted a plan to the State detailing the additional flexibility needed to reach families in need of child care.

Providers and child care workers are the backbone of the City’s child care system and they need access to the flexible federal funding the federal government has allocated specifically to help this critical sector recover from the pandemic. Furthermore, for families, the current State eligibility and documentation rules are outdated and rigid. While current state legislation is an important first step, New York City is also calling on New York State to work collaboratively to expand access to child care in the neighborhoods hit hardest by COVID and to reduce the administrative burden to families and providers.

“To address the citywide challenges of income inequality, homelessness, and housing instability, we need all levels of government working together to find, develop, test, and implement solutions,” said **Department of Social Services Commissioner Steven Banks**. “These reforms would ensure families and working parents facing hard times can access the childcare they need, without jumping through arbitrary hoops, which is good for the whole family – helping children grow and providing parents with vital supports during challenging times. We urge the State to pass this legislation.”

“Expanding access to child care services is crucial to ensuring an equitable recovery,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Dave A. Chokshi**. “Helping more families access child care will help our city recover quicker and provide much needed services and jobs across New York City.”

“For New York City to fully recover from the pandemic, we must ensure that all families have the resources and support they need to stabilize their lives. Ensuring that thousands more children have access to low-cost child care, especially children from communities across the City hit hardest by the pandemic, is an essential step in NYC’s recovery for all. I thank Senator Brisport and Assembly Member Hevesi for introducing legislation needed to expand access to affordable child care, and I look forward to working with the State to make our plan a reality as quickly as possible,” said **ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell**.

“Access to free and affordable child care is critical to New York City’s recovery from the pandemic, and this legislation would allow thousands of additional families to receive care, including through year round 3-K and Pre-K for All services,” said **Schools Chancellor Meisha Porter**. “Expanding access to child care will give more children a strong

start in school and life, while providing a pivotal resource to communities across the City when they need it most.”

“Child care and early childhood education helps children and their families thrive. Now is the time to get this assistance to as many families as we can,” said **Executive Director of the Children’s Cabinet Megan Tackney**. “We must do this alongside support for our child care providers, who are the foundation of this critical system.”

“Covid-19 has exposed what many of us already knew: Childcare is essential to New York’s working families,” said **Representative Yvette Clarke**. “It allows parents the safety and peace of mind to go to work knowing that their child is well taken care of. Not only does childcare provide us with peace of mind, but it is a critical component to a robust economic recovery from the worst public health pandemic in over a century. Data indicates that the economic hit taken by women has been the most severe and the lack of access to child care makes it impossible for working mothers to gain a foothold in the job market as a result, childcare is essential because it offers stability required to uplift us in our pursuit of recovery. As a member of Congress representing the 9th district of New York, I am proud to have played an integral role in fighting for, voting for, and obtaining this funding for the city of New York and I thank Mayor de Blasio for his advocacy and commitment to New Yorkers as he utilizes these federal dollars to expand low-cost and free childcare for thousands of families across our five boroughs.”

“Throughout the pandemic and before, the struggle to find affordable child care was the final straw for so many working families juggling jobs and parenting,” said **Representative Nydia M. Velázquez**. “Reopening and increasing the availability of child care centers will be central to ensuring a just and equitable recovery as we build back our City from the pandemic. I applaud Mayor de Blasio for this initiative that will expand low-cost and free child care to an additional 15,000 children. This is a need that I hear day in and day out from my constituents and will go a long way towards getting our working families the support they deserve.”

“More and more New Yorkers are returning to the office each day, and school is out in just a couple of weeks - the demand for childcare is on a steep rise,” said **State Senator Roxanne Persaud**. “New York City’s plan to expand care to 15,000 more kids is essential. I’m proud to co-sponsor two key bills (S.6655 and S. 6706-A) to make this happen for our kids, for parents and the daycare providers that serve our communities.”

“Expanding child care in New York City will be key to a strong, fair, and just recovery, especially in neighborhoods hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic,” said **Council Member Adrienne Adams**. “I support the City’s advocacy to raise the income threshold for subsidized child care, decouple full-day child care from work hours, and distribute federal stimulus funds to support the child care sector. These necessary actions will benefit thousands of children and families for the better.”

“The Covid-19 pandemic has pushed parents and childcare providers in New York City past their breaking point. It is critical, then, that my colleagues in the State Legislature use this \$2 billion in federal funding to stabilize and expand the child-care sector here in New York City and bring relief to thousands of working parents and their kids as workplaces begin to re-open,” said

Council Member Farah N. Louis, co-chair of the Women’s Caucus and vice co-chair of the Black, Latino and Asian Caucus. “Long term, we must build back a better childcare system that gives all New York families – including working-class Black and Brown communities devastated by Covid-19 – access to affordable and flexible child-care. Approving these two bills is a start. New York City expects to see its fair share of funding.”

"As more businesses reopen in person, parents throughout New York are desperately seeking affordable, high-quality child care and all too often facing bureaucratic obstacles in obtaining it," said **Gregory Brender, Director of Public Policy at the Day Care Council of New York.**

"The legislation announced today from Mayor de Blasio, Assembly member Hevesi and Senator Brisport will increase access to high-quality child care by expanding access to subsidies, eliminating burdensome requirements that prevent working families from accessing child care and implementing a cost study so that providers will be funded at the true cost of care. The time for Albany to act is now!"

“2021 has been a momentous year for children, and new investment in child care aims to help. The Governor’s Child Care Availability Task Force released recommendations that create a roadmap for transforming and dramatically expanding child care in New York State; the State received more than \$2.3 billion in COVID-relief child care funds; and the 2021-22 State budget took large steps to allow more families to benefit from child care subsidies and decrease parent costs across the state. However, there is more to be done. State leaders must pass common-sense laws this session to ensure federal relief funds benefit families quickly and begin to rebuild the battered child care system. Without delay, the State must give counties flexibility to cover more working families by allowing them to expand income-related eligibility and improve children’s access to child care’s full curriculum and scheduling predictability by delinking parental hours of work from hours in child care. New York must get federal funds out the door and into the hands of child care providers and families with a speed that reflects the urgent need of families and child care providers. No more delays,” said **Dede Hill, Director of Policy, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, facilitator of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care, and a member of the Child Care Availability Task Force.**

“Access to high-quality affordable early care and education is crucial to New York’s economic recovery from the pandemic, and to the health and well-being of our state’s children,” said **Jennifer March, Executive Director of Citizens’ Committee for Children.** “Yet, based on data from the recent Household Pulse Survey, 24% of working-age women in the New York Metro Area cite caring for children as their primary reason for not working during the pandemic. That’s why the Citizens' Committee For Children and the Campaign for Children urge the State to make child care more accessible to families at a moment when they need it most. The state must pass legislation to allow localities to expand child care income eligibility to serve thousands more additional children, and a second bill to decouple child care subsidies from parents’ hours of work to ensure child care stability for children, families and providers. In addition, we are also calling on the State to release the federal child care funds it has received through several stimulus packages, to ensure the City can begin to expand access to care to families and support providers immediately. Investing in accessible, quality child care is an investment in our children, families, and the City's future. Albany must act now.”

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