

**TESTIMONY OF THE EARLY CARE & EDUCATION CONSORTIUM (ECEC)
JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON HUMAN SERVICES
FEBRUARY 5, 2026**

Chairpersons and Honorable Members of the Senate and Assembly:

The Early Care & Education Consortium (“ECEC”) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the Executive Budget proposals affecting early childhood education and child care.

ECEC represents 256 private, community-based early care and education centers across New York State, offering child care, before- and after-school and summer programs that collectively serve over 33 thousand subsidy, Head Start, military, and private pay children and families each day. Our members are an essential part of New York’s early learning infrastructure and workforce.

Support for Universal Prekindergarten Expansion — Through a Mixed Delivery Model

ECEC supports the Governor’s commitment to expanding access to full-day universal prekindergarten for four-year-olds statewide by the start of the 2028–2029 school year. We commend the significant increase in per-pupil funding to the greater of \$10,000 or a district’s Foundation Aid rate, which reflects a meaningful acknowledgment that the true cost of providing high-quality early education often exceeds current allocations, and a recognition that reimbursement rates have historically been inadequate across much of the state.

However, the success of universal prekindergarten that meets the diverse needs of New York families depends on a **mixed-delivery system** that fully includes private and community-based providers alongside school districts. New York has long relied on mixed delivery to expand access quickly, reach diverse communities, and leverage existing capacity. Private providers already operate high-quality programs, employ trained early childhood professionals, operate purpose-built facilities, and serve families who depend on continuity of care, from birth through age five.

ECEC strongly urges that all universal prekindergarten expansions and related aid streams explicitly preserve and strengthen mixed delivery. Intentionally or inadvertently excluding private and community-based providers would reduce available seats, disrupt existing child care arrangements, increase the cost of care for younger children, and undermine parental choice—particularly for working families who rely on full-day, year-round care.

Universal Prekindergarten Aid and Program Stability

ECEC also supports the substantial increase in Universal Prekindergarten Aid, including investments to support expanded access for both four-year-olds statewide and three-year-olds in New York City. Predictable and sufficient per-pupil funding is critical to maintaining program quality, workforce stability, and equitable access.

To be effective, these investments must flow in a timely and administratively workable manner to all eligible providers, including nonpublic programs that operate under contracts with school districts. Any expansion that relies solely on district-operated classrooms risks exacerbating existing capacity and workforce shortages. As such, it is critical that New York City re-open the 3K and Pre-K request for proposal (RFP) process to allow additional community-based providers—many of whom are struggling to stay afloat due to a loss of enrollment to city-run schools—to participate. This RFP was last issued approximately six years ago, preventing newer providers and providers more recently interested in participating in this successful, mixed-delivery program from doing so.

Support for Sustained Funding for CCAP

ECEC supports the Governor’s proposal to provide an additional \$1.23 billion to bolster the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), the State’s subsidy program for families below 85% of the state median income. About a third of the families ECEC member companies serve rely on CCAP to send their children to child care each day, allowing them to go to work or school and contribute to the state’s economy.

Over the past year, an increasing number of counties have closed enrollment and opened up waitlists, turning away otherwise-eligible families who need help affording the cost of child care. Further, several counties have discontinued child care services for families as they seek to renew their certification, stating that “the district does not have the funding to provide child care assistance for the entire authorization period.” This has significant impacts on children who lack the continuity of care that is a critical part of their healthy development; families, who no longer have a safe and reliable place to send their child; providers, who rely on these families sending their children to their facilities each day; and the economy, as parents may have to drop out of the workforce without access to care. It is critical that New York State continue to invest in the CCAP program so eligible working families are able to continue to receive the support they need.

Federal CCDF Funding Uncertainty and State Fiscal Risk

ECEC is increasingly concerned about the status of federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) resources and the implications for New York’s child care system. Recent

federal actions restricting access to CCDF and related funding streams raise serious questions about the duration and reliability of these funds.

While New York may be able to rely temporarily on reserve funding, those reserves are finite. ECEC respectfully requests clarity from the Administration and the Legislature regarding:

- How long existing CCDF reserves are expected to sustain current child care subsidies and programs, if another federal freeze goes into effect;
- Whether contingency plans are in place should federal restrictions continue or expand; and
- How the State intends to avoid abrupt disruptions to providers and families who depend on these funds.

Without clear planning, uncertainty around CCDF funding threatens provider solvency, workforce retention, and access to care for working families.

Conclusion

ECEC supports the Governor's early childhood proposals and shares the Administration's goal of expanding access to high-quality early learning. To achieve that goal, we respectfully urge the Legislature to:

1. Ensure that all universal prekindergarten expansions preserve and strengthen mixed delivery, including private providers;
2. Ensure CCAP is adequately supported at the state level so eligible low-income families are able to access the reliable the care they need; and
3. Address the fiscal and operational risks posed by uncertainty in federal CCDF funding.

ECEC stands ready to work with the Legislature and the Administration to ensure that New York's early care and education system remains stable, inclusive, and responsive to families' needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Early Care & Education Consortium (ECEC)