



Written Testimony before the Joint Fiscal Committees on the SFY 2026-27 Executive Budget Human Services Budget Hearing

February 5, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony on the 2026-27 New York State Executive Budget. The Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative ([RMAPI](#)) has developed a list of policy priorities for 2026 with actions aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty by shifting power to enable upward mobility for all families. As a Collective Impact initiative that develops our policy agenda in collaboration with over 150 community and government leaders, representatives from non-profit agencies, subject matter experts, and people directly impacted by poverty – we urge you to include RMAPI’s policy priorities in New York State’s 2026 budget.

Top Human Services Budget Recommendations for 2026:

Enable universal child care to meet the needs of all families

Commit \$1.7 billion for the Child Care Assistance Program; \$1.2 billion to increase child care workforce compensation; and \$150 million to build on universal child care pilots throughout the state.

RMAPI urges New York to take significant steps toward achieving statewide universal child care:

- Build on the Governor’s landmark proposal for annual, recurring funding for the Child Care Assistance Program by prioritizing low-income families and clearing county backlogs and waiting lists as a first step toward universal care (\$1.7 billion)

We encourage the legislature to adopt the Governor’s proposed recurring investment in New York’s Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), and add additional funding as needed to ensure no eligible families are turned away or placed on waitlists. RMAPI also urges the legislature to work with the Governor to amend the budget language and allow counties to access these supplemental funds over a longer period that better reflects their spending obligations. Enrollment in the state’s Child Care Assistance Program increased by more than 100,000 in just four years¹. This is a positive development, but as of January 2026, 33 counties and NYC have closed enrollment or started waitlists because demand is outpacing investment

¹ Office of Children and Family Services. *Child Care Data*. New York State, <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/data/>

in the program, leaving thousands of eligible families across the state scrambling to patch together care for their children, with some having to reduce their work hours or leave the workforce altogether.

While Monroe County's enrollment remains open for now, we know that increased funding will allow applications to continue and prevent estimated interruptions in accessing the Child Care Assistance Program that allows our community to receive the care they need and continue participating in the workforce, especially for our lowest-income community members.

- Enact a workforce compensation program (S5533/A492), as detailed in Governor Hochul's Child Care Availability Task Force's Roadmap to Universal Child Care (\$1.2 billion).

The Executive Budget does not currently allocate any funding for the child care workforce. If no funding is added before the budget is finalized, this will be the second year in a row since the pandemic that there are no funds for the child care workforce. We cannot achieve universal child care without recruiting and retaining far more professionals in the field. The average wage for the child care workforce² (94% women, and more than 53% people of color) is approximately \$38,000, with family-based providers earning even less. In contrast, the median annual salary for full-time New York workers is approximately \$67,000 per year.

RMAPI has consistently advocated for increasing wages and centers racial equity in all of our work. The 2026-2027 State budget can address both of these issues by focusing on wages for the child care workforce. The legislature must build upon the Governor's strong child care proposals by providing ongoing, permanent and reliable compensation supplements to all members of the child care workforce until New York has achieved statewide universal child care that pays providers adequate rates to pay the workforce a true living wage, without passing costs to families who need affordable care now.

- Increase the Governor's initial \$60+ million investment in Broome, Dutchess and Monroe Counties to pilot universal care projects that add 1,000 more seats for children 0 – 3 in each county. (\$150 million).

We encourage the legislature to adopt the Governor's proposal to invest \$66 million to support Community Care models in three communities, including Monroe County and add more funds if necessary to ensure they are truly universal, and are treated not as one-time pilots, but as a permanent bridge to statewide universal child care. This investment will add 1,000 more seats for children 0 – 3 in each county, which are already experiencing minimal slots for infant and toddler care.

Conclusion

If the proposals above are included in the final budget, alongside sustained investments to ensure fair, adequate compensation for the early childhood and afterschool workforce — and implemented with equity at the center, these proposals would be transformative for New York

² Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy. *Child Care Workforce 2026*. January 2026, <https://scaany.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Child-Care-Workforce-2026-Schuyler-Center-one-pager.pdf>

families and represent a significant step toward enabling truly universal, affordable child care statewide.

In everything RMAPI does, our decisions and actions abide by our Guiding Principles of centering racial equity, addressing collective trauma and revitalizing neighborhoods. Now more than ever, we need a New York State budget that aligns with these Guiding Principles and ensures that the most vulnerable in our communities are protected and supported and receive the care they need.

As noted above, New York is taking significant steps toward achieving universal child care this year. The state's continued investments in early childhood care helps families achieve greater upward mobility, reduce poverty and inequality, and gives children the best possible start to life. Again, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the committee. Please feel free to contact me for clarification or more information.

Sincerely,

Aqua Y. Porter

Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aqua Y. Porter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

*** send your written testimony to wamchair@nyassembly.gov AND financechair@nysenate.gov no later than 5pm on the scheduled date of the hearing.**