



ALL OUR KIN INC

NEWYORK@ALLOURKIN.ORG 917-933-3282 WWW.ALLOURKIN.ORG

Steven Morales  
NY Policy Director  
All Our Kin, Inc.  
Bronx, NY  
[steven@allourkin.org](mailto:steven@allourkin.org)  
718-739-1875

**Testimony Submitted by Steven Morales, NY Policy Director of All Our Kin  
to the Committee on Children and Families  
New York State Senate  
January 26, 2023**

Honorable Chair Brisport and Members of the Committee on Children and Families:

My name is Steven Morales and I'm the New York Policy Director at All Our Kin. All Our Kin is a national nonprofit organization that trains, supports, and sustains home-based family child care educators in New York City. Most of the educators we serve are located in the Bronx, where we work with nearly 300 family child care educators with the capacity to care for over 4,000 children. We are also proud Steering Committee members of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care.

I want to start by talking a bit about the role that family child care programs (child care programs that operate out of an educator's home) play in caring for and educating our state's youngest children. Family child care is a critical part of New York's child care infrastructure. Many parents choose family child care because of its unique ability to offer flexible hours, care for mixed age groups, and culturally responsive care in a family's home language. In New York State: 71 percent of licensed child care programs are family or group family child care; family child care programs have the capacity to care for over 139,000 children; and 40 percent of children in publicly funded care are cared for in family child care programs. Despite the demand for family child care and center based care across the state, our child care system remains in crisis.

In my testimony at last year's joint budget hearing, I shared the stories of two educators in the Bronx who own home-based child care businesses and were struggling to meet all of the expenses of a high-quality child care program. They talked about losing staff to retail jobs that were able to pay higher wages and offer benefits that they could not afford as child care businesses. One educator, Isaura, shared that she worries about her own aging mother, who works as an assistant in her program and is unable to retire because Isaura cannot afford to offer her employees retirement benefits. This was last year. And sadly, this year's story is much the same.



ALL OUR KIN INC

NEWYORK@ALLOURKIN.ORG 917-933-3282 WWW.ALLOURKIN.ORG

By now, you've heard and will hear from constituents in rural and urban areas alike about the exodus from the child care field and resulting massive decline in the availability of child care statewide. This all stems from the inability of our market-based system to provide competitive compensation for the child care workforce. And the data bear that out. On average, child care educators in New York are in the bottom 4 percent of all earners, and many times, family child care providers earn even less. This means that 96% of professionals earn higher wages than the people who are caring for and educating our youngest children every day.

And according to a recent analysis by The Children's Agenda, since the beginning of the pandemic, New York State has experienced a net loss of over 1,200 family child care programs which translates to over 13,000 lost child care slots. That's 1,200 businesses shuttered, thousands of jobs lost, and 13,000 families who had care prior to the pandemic that no longer have a trusted place to bring their children while they work or attend school. And that doesn't include the many child care centers that have closed their doors as well.

New York State must stabilize and expand our child care supply to ensure that all families who need child care are able to access it, and that educators are paid a rate that allows them to sustain their businesses, their employees, and their families for the long-term.

To do so, we need a two-fold investment in the early childhood workforce. For the short term, we need a workforce compensation fund that offers all child care workers a compensation supplement of at least \$12,500 each. We consistently hear from child care providers that the stabilization grants of the past two years did their job. But they were never intended to solve the state's long term child care crisis. So when those temporary payments stopped, providers found themselves back at square one wondering how they would pay their bills.

That is why, in addition to a short-term workforce fund, we need a legislative and budgetary commitment to transition to a new child care compensation model by 2025 that pays child care providers based on what it truly costs to provide care. This commitment is necessary so that educators can earn competitive wages and benefits that sustain their businesses and allow them to continue serving our state's children for the long term. Washington D.C. has enacted a similar plan and New York should lead the way as the first big state to commit to long-term investment in the child care workforce.

In addition to the child care workforce, we know that there are still thousands of families across the state who cannot access child care subsidies. We are glad that the Governor wants to increase eligibility and reduce some of the burdens that make it difficult for families to access child care assistance. And we believe that the state must go further by ensuring that undocumented children have access to child care assistance and by reducing, and eventually eliminating, the barriers that stand in the way of families' access to care. New York can and must continue to work toward a



ALL OUR KIN INC

NEWYORK@ALLOURKIN.ORG 917-933-3282 [WWW.ALLOURKIN.ORG](http://WWW.ALLOURKIN.ORG)

system where every family is able to receive the care they need, when they need it, in the setting of their choice.

In closing, despite the work of last year's budget, the child care crisis in New York State is far from over. Providers in centers and family child care programs alike are still struggling to keep their doors open. Ninety percent of eligible children and families are still without access to the care they need. Child care is what allows parents to work and children to thrive. We urge you to seize the opportunity to support our children, to allow parents to remain in the workforce, and to make New York State the best place in the country to raise a family by investing in child care.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.