



Center for Children's Initiatives

Testimony of Center for Children's Initiatives

Joint Legislative Public Hearing

2017-18 Executive Budget Proposal: Elementary and Secondary Education

Honorable Catherine Nolan, Chair, Assembly Education Committee

Honorable Carl Marcellino, Chair, Senate Education Committee

Honorable Herman D. Farrell, Chair, Assembly Ways and Means Committee

Catharine Young, Chair, Senate Finance Committee

Submitted by

Betty Holcomb, Policy Director

February 14, 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the 2017-18 Executive Budget Proposal for Elementary and Secondary Education. The Center for Children's Initiatives (CCI) has deep expertise and experience in the launch and implementation of the state's pre-K program, as a key component of education reform and a proven strategy for preparing children for success in school and later life.

Currently, CCI helps lead the Ready for Kindergarten, Ready for College Campaign, in partnership with the Alliance for Quality Education and Citizen Action. CCI also helped found and continues to help lead Winning Beginning, NY, the state's leading coalition for early care and learning. CCI also partners with the Campaign for Educational Equity in the release a multi-year roadmap to financing high quality pre-K for the state's three- and four-year-olds. Our testimony today draws on that experience and the shared agenda carried by these campaigns and partnerships.

PRE-K: A WISE INVESTMENT AND SOME PROGRESS

The evidence to support the investment in early education is clear and compelling; Investments in high-quality full-day services more than pay for themselves and are proven strategies for reversing the growing income inequality in New York State, the most extreme in the nation.¹

¹ For complete references to the research case, see endnotes in our attached report, "Too Many Children Still Waiting," released January 2017, which includes both national and New York-specific data.

² See the landmark study, from Neurons to Neighborhoods, published by the National

We are glad that New York State leaders have recognized this evidence with strategic investments in prekindergarten in recent years, and that those investments include new attention to full-day services and quality standards as the program expands.

We also appreciate that the state has wisely chosen to deliver pre-K services through a mixed delivery system that includes early childhood programs in the community as well as public schools. Today, more than half the pre-K services are offered in community settings, a strategy that leverages existing resources and better serves the state's working families who often need extended hours and year-round care.

We appreciate the Governor's bold pledge made in 2014 to fund high-quality pre-K for all the state's four-year-olds. We applaud both the goal and the pledge. We also agree with national media and policymakers who have given New York significant attention for setting that agenda. The initial state investment that year of \$340 million—with \$300 million earmarked for New York City's bold Pre-K for All initiative—was groundbreaking.

But the pledge to make pre-K truly universal has not been kept for all the state's four-year-olds. The size and nature of the investments, as well as the state's evolving pre-K financing strategy itself, have slowed progress and created new inequities:

Expanding Access to Full-Day Pre-K: Striking Inequity Persists

Since 2014, Governor Cuomo has included some new investment in pre-K in each annual budget. Starting in 2015, he added 3-year-olds to the program, with only modest new investment and restricted the grant to 3's. The legislature opened that new program to four-year-olds. In 2016, the Governor again added a new investment targeted to 3's. The legislature failed to open eligibility to 4's. The investment strategy for investment since 2014 has increased the inequity between New York City—which now has 70,000 four-year-olds enrolled in full-day pre-K—and the rest of the state. The inequity persists even though many districts came forward with a plan to offer new full-day pre-K seats for four-year-olds. The reason: The investment for the rest of the state lagged far behind New York City.

Today, 81 percent of the state’s four-year-olds outside New York City—more than 106,000—are still waiting for full-day pre-K. The disparities are especially stark, when considered region by region around New York State:

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES: 4-YEAR OLDS WITHOUT FULL-DAY PRE-K BY COMMUNITY

	Number of 4-Year-Olds Without Access to Full-Day Pre-K	Percent of 4-Year-Olds Without Access to Full-Day Pre-K
Capital District	7,287	78%
Central New York	5,321	75%
Finger Lakes	7,650	72%
Hudson Valley	21,991	85%
Long Island	24,922	91%
Mohawk Valley	3,330	75%
North Country	3,741	89%
Southern Tier	3,488	62%
Western New York	8,221	69%

The bottom-line: Today, only New York City has Pre-K for All, even as districts around the state are ready to add full-day pre-K for 4-year-olds and demand from parents is rising. In any districts, seats are offered by lottery, leaving many families out. This inequity in access must be addressed.

Pre-K Financing Strategy: Further Reform Needed

The total state investment in pre-K has now grown to \$803 million, about half of that total – nearly \$386 million— supported by invested in the original Universal Prekindergarten program, which uses an aid formula distributed by allocations to more than 440 participating school districts. That aid supports a part-day pre-K service.

In 2013, the Governor introduced the first funding for full-day pre-K—and a new financing strategy—a competitive grant. Since then, competitive grants have become the primary pre-K financing strategy—a distinctive break from the previous strategy of distributing aid through allocation, like other education services. Competitive grants now account for \$417 million, and have led to the creation of six separate state pre-K funding streams (See Appendix A on page 8 for background.) Each competitive grant expires after five years, putting the funding at risk for the long-term.

The strategy for financing pre-K is now widely recognized as unnecessarily complicated, slowing implementation. In recent years, for example, districts did not have a definite answer on resources and could not get seats in place until mid-year. Each expires after five years, putting the funding at risk for the long-term. That unpredictability makes it difficult for districts to plan. Finally, the use of competitive grants creates winners and

losers among districts—and ultimately, children and families living in different communities.

Three-Year-Olds

In addition, it is important to recognize the need to adjust the rates to address the specific needs of three-year-olds. Strong research findings document the value of starting early with children, especially those considered at risk because of family circumstances.² Offering two years of preschool can lead to larger gains for children. States can reduce even better outcomes when the services start early and are aligned from birth through school age. The state's modest investment in three year olds did spark interest in districts already serving four year olds. But for a third year in a row, the state failed to adjust the rates to address the specific needs of three-year-olds as set forth in the state's Early Learning Guidelines, including class size and teacher preparation and additional social supports necessary for serving at-risk children.

Vision for the Future: Quality Pre-K for All

CCI has worked with the Campaign for Educational Equity to offer a roadmap to financing strategies and implementation to make high quality full day pre-K available to three and four year olds. We have also put forward a proposal, *Securing the Future of New York's Children*³ to establish a single, stable, transparent and appropriately funded pre-K system, developed in consultation with early childhood and public education experts across New York State. We have partnered with the Ready for Kindergarten Campaign and the Winning Beginning NY coalition in advocating for a quality, appropriated pre-k program, and developed an agenda to meet that goal in each of the last four years.

We offer testimony and our responses to the Executive budget, as well as recommendations for this year's enacted budget in the context of this ongoing work and our continuing partnerships which seeks to support state efforts to fulfill the promise for making quality full-day pre-K available to New York's children. That will require significant investment to increase access, a sustainable financing strategy and the infrastructure to support a quality program.

There is some progress toward those goals in the Governor's budget this year, but also significant actions that need to be taken in the final budget agreement.

² See the landmark study, from *Neurons to Neighborhoods*, published by the National Academy of Science, at www.nas.edu. Also, see Abbott Preschool Program Longitudinal Effects Study (APPLES) at www.nieer.org for benefits of offering pre-k to 3-and 4-year-olds.

³ Both the roadmap, *Making Prekindergarten Truly Universal in New York State*, and the report *Securing the Future of New York's Children* are available at www.ccipolicy.org.

PRE-K IN THE EXECUTIVE BUDGET: KEY CONCERNS

The Governor's budget appears to protect all current investments of \$803 million in pre-K, including both full-day and part-day services for 3- and 4-year-olds.

In addition, the Governor's budget also budget takes an important first step to reform pre-K financing and put it on a sustainable path, by securing the Priority Pre-K Program and protecting existing services for more than 6,000 children around the state.

We applaud this precedent and the Governor's commitment to "merge the State's prekindergarten program into a single program, beginning in the 2017-18 school year, starting with the protection of the \$30.53 million invested in Priority Prekindergarten program, and aligning it with the \$385.03 million Universal Prekindergarten program – as long as per-child rates appropriately support all children currently served.

We also support the Governor's addition of \$5 million for high-need districts that still lack pre-K services, as a modest next step in expanding access to full-day pre-K.

We support the full protection of the \$22 million allocated for pre-K in the 2016 budget, including the amount that was not awarded to districts. We urge the legislature to open eligibility to 4-year-olds in the 2017 budget.

We remain concerned, however, that pre-K aid include per-pupil rates that appropriately supports all children currently served with a high-quality learning opportunity. New York City's mayor has indicated that the proposed new pre-K rates included in the Executive budget could create a significant shortfall for the city's pre-K services going forward. It is essential that New York City's pre-K funding be protected.

We also urge the legislature to include appropriate investment in K-12 aid, to ensure that pre-K is followed by a continuum of quality educational services that prepare children for college and career, especially in the early elementary years as they are learning to read.

However, even these steps are not enough.

NEXT STEPS: AGENDA FOR PRE-K IN ENACTED 2017-18 BUDGET

We urge the Governor and state leaders to fulfill the promise to make pre-K truly universal for four-year-olds, and to expand opportunity for the state's youngest citizens and to improve educational outcomes for New Yorkers, by taking these next steps:

- ▶ Increase the investment to expand access to high-quality full-day pre-K. State leaders should:

Add at least \$150 million to the current \$803 million invested in Pre-K to expand quality Pre-K focused on high need three- and four-year-olds, including.

- \$125 million to expand access to Pre-K full day and part day for both three- and four-year-olds
 - \$25 million to assist programs in meeting high quality standards.
 - Also, support the Governor's proposal to protect the full \$22 million for Pre-K in the 2016 budget – but open eligibility to 4's in 2017.
- ▶ Fully protect funding for New York City's Pre-K for All program.
The Mayor of New York City has testified that the Governor's proposal for pre-K aid would result in the loss of \$34 million or 3400 slots in the city's Pre-K for All program. New York City's pre-K aid going forward must be maintained at a level per-child that supports all current services.

- ▶ Reform pre-K financing.

Support the Governor's proposal to convert the \$30 million Priority Pre-K program to an aid formula distributed by allocation as the next step to creating a single State Pre-K program. But ensure the rates going forward fully protect existing slots, including those in New York City. This step could protect existing Pre-K services for 6,000 children and put the state on a path toward sustainable, predictable financing for Pre-K – if per-seat rates appropriately support all children currently served.

- ▶ Include appropriate investment in K-12 Aid.

To ensure Pre-K is followed by a continuum of quality educational services that prepare children for college and careers, the K-12 public school system needs to have adequate and appropriate investment.

- ▶ Continue to require inclusion of community-based programs in state pre-K program.

The state has wisely chosen to deliver Pre-K services through a mixed delivery system that includes early childhood programs in the community. Today, more than half of the Pre-K services are offered in community settings, a strategy that leverages existing resources, and better serves the State's working families who often need extended hours and year-round care. Many also serve infants and toddlers, creating

the capacity to build a system of stable, continuous care and learning that experts say can most benefit young children.

Taking these actions in the 2017-18 enacted budget will strengthen the state's Prekindergarten program. CCI stands ready to serve as a resource in moving a longer-term agenda forward to create a sustainable approach to financing these critical services, and at rates that support a quality educational service.

For more information, visit www.ccipolicy.org or contact Betty Holcomb, CCI policy director at bholcomb@ccinyc.org.

APPENDIX A: NEW YORK STATE PREKINDERGARTEN FUNDING (\$803 million; 118,000 children enrolled)

		Recurring Formula Based Allocation (\$386M)			Competitive Grants (\$417M)		
		Targeted Pre-K (1966) ¹	Universal Pre-K (1997)	Priority Pre-K (2013)	Statewide Full-Day Pre-K (2014)	High Need 3- and 4-Year-Olds (2015)	High Need 3-Year-Olds (2016)
Number of Participating Districts		3 BOCES	444 School Districts	25 School Districts	53 School Districts + 26 CBO's	34 School Districts	25 School Districts
Current Annual Appropriation ²		\$1.3M	\$385M	\$25M	\$340M (\$300M NYC, \$40M ROS)	\$30M	\$22M (Only \$10.4M awarded)
Number Children Served		308	100,416	6,054 students	31,680 (NYC) ⁴ 5,000 (ROS)	1,277 (4s); 2,018 (3s)	1,500 3-year-olds
Rates Per Child ³		Folded into UPK in 2007-2008, follow same rates	Formula based on state school aid, usually half the aid per child - with minimum set at \$2,700 per child ⁵	Formula based on UPK, with rate doubled for full-day	\$10,000, with certified teacher; \$7,000, with teacher in study plan to obtain certification	Formula based on UPK, with rate doubled for full-day	Formula based on UPK, with rate doubled for full-day
Length of Day		High-need 3s and 4s	Half-Day or Full-Day no rate differential ⁶	Half-Day or Full-Day	Full-Day	Half-Day or Full-Day	Half-Day or Full-Day
Child Eligibility			All 4s	High-need 4s	All 4s	High-need 3s and 4s	High-need 3s
Governance		BOCES in public schools	School Districts, with mandate for collaboration with CBO's	School Districts, with mandate for collaboration with CBO's	School District, with new option for individual entities (Charters added)	School Districts, with mandate for collaboration with CBO's	School Districts, with mandate for collaboration with CBO's
Funding Strategy		Recurring grant	Recurring formula-based, non-competitive grant	Competitive grant in year 1, renewed based on meeting performance targets	Competitive grant, with regional funding targets	Competitive grant, based on Priority Pre-K framework	Competitive grant, based on Priority Pre-K framework
District Eligibility ⁸					Renewed based on meeting performance target		
Financing Strategy		Periodic Payments in year services are delivered	Periodic payments in year services are delivered	Periodic payments in year services are delivered	Delayed Reimbursement in year 1; After year 1, districts receive 25% upfront for following year	Periodic payments in year services are delivered	Periodic payments in year services are delivered

*The original funding chart was prepared by The New York State Education Department, and adapted by the Center for Children's Initiatives, 2016, for discussion purposes only. For more information, contact bholcomb@ccincny.org.

¹ Started as Experimental Pre-K, largely folded into Universal Pre-K in 1997, except 3 BOCES.

² Current as of the 2016 state enacted budget.

³ The numbers of children are those that are supported by each funding stream. The numbers do not necessarily add up to the total number of children enrolled in state pre-k programs, since some districts are "fully-implemented" and agree to accept all 4-year-olds who apply, even if state pre-k funding does not cover the costs. In exchange, those districts are exempt from maintenance of effort requirements. In other cases, districts have used federal funding, such as Title I, to cover pre-k services or to use local tax levy funds. In addition, some children are supported by more than one funding stream, when part-day seats are converted to full-day. In those cases, students may be supported by UPK and full-day funding, as well as other state pre-k funding.

⁴ The enrollment numbers in the chart represent the first year of implementation of the new state grant. The City's enrollment in Pre-K for All is now more than 70,000 4s.

⁵ Universal Pre-K has two sets of rates. One is for the enrollment prior to 2008; the second is for the expansion that took place in 2008, when the program nearly doubled in size. Districts must maintain the original enrollment to be eligible for the second.

⁶ Half-day is defined as at least 2.5 hours. Full-day must be at least 5 hours. Some districts, including NYC, define full-day as full school day of 6 hours and 20 minutes.

⁷ Started as Experimental Pre-K, largely folded into Universal Pre-K in 2007-2008, except 3 BOCES.

⁸ All pre-K programs are subject to annual appropriations being made in state budget.

Too Many Children Still Waiting

*Make Quality Early Learning
Top Priority In 2017 Budget*



**PUBLIC POLICY AND
EDUCATION FUND OF NEW YORK**



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The Ready for Kindergarten, Ready for College Campaign is led by the Alliance for Quality Education, Citizen Action of New York, the Public Policy and Education Fund and the Center for Children's Initiatives.

Too Many Children Still Waiting

Make Quality Early Learning Top Priority In 2017 Budget

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GOVERNOR CUOMO: KEEP THE PROMISE TO NEW YORK'S EARLY LEARNERS

Make Quality Early Learning Top Priority in 2017 State Budget



"Every child deserves a fair shot at a high-quality education and ... (pre-K) funding will help level the academic playing field."

Governor Andrew Cuomo, 2016

"We're going to have a statewide pre-kindergarten program funded by the state. That's what we said we're going to do and that's what we're going to do. I said all along that we'll fund the need. ... And as quickly as cities can bring it online, we will fund it."

Governor Andrew Cuomo, 2014

We agree: Every child deserves a fair shot.

The Governor was also right to state that income inequality is growing and "too many are still left in the shadow of opportunity." *Nearly a quarter of all children under 5 in New York now live in poverty.*

We agree: Income inequality is on the rise in New York, a fact that is especially harmful to young children and their families. The cost of quality early childhood education is simply out of reach. But it is essential to both preparing children for success in school and life and ensuring family economic security.¹

New York needs to fund the promise for quality pre-K for all and increase investment in quality child care. These companion investments are essential for New York to ensure children and families succeed.

OPPORTUNITIES LOST

WORKING FAMILIES AND STATE'S YOUNGEST LEARNERS LEFT OUT BY FLAT-FUNDING FOR CHILD CARE AND FULL-DAY PRE-K FOR 4-YEAR-OLDS

HIGHLIGHTS

- 4-year-olds outside New York City are still waiting at the door, three years after state leaders pledged to offer full-day pre-K for all. Only New York City now offers Pre-K for All, while 81 percent of 4-year olds outside the City are denied the same opportunity.
- State leaders added zero funding for full day pre-K for 4-year-olds last year, despite growing demand from parents and school districts. As a result, many districts offer no full-day pre-K for 4-year-olds; those that do must offer seats by lottery and turn away families. The inequity in access must be addressed.
- 6,000 children turning four in 2017 are at risk of losing access to existing full day pre-K seats in 2017-2018 school year, as competitive grants begin to expire, more opportunities lost.
- The current strategy of funding pre-K through competitive grants targeted to high-need districts puts additional districts at risk of losing pre-K funding in the future and harder for them to meet the needs of their youngest learners.
- The cost of child care in New York State is now the highest in the nation. Yet 83 percent of families eligible for child care assistance are denied support. Low-income working families seeking a subsidy face long waiting lists, and or in some counties, applications are frozen, due to lack of funds. Again, young learners miss the opportunity to be ready for kindergarten.

The evidence is clear and convincing: Investments in quality child care and full-day pre-K more pay for themselves and are proven strategies for reversing the growing income inequality in New York State, the most extreme in the nation.

New York State leaders must build opportunity and stem inequality by expanding investments in quality child care and full-day pre-K. No child or family should be left waiting another year.

Too Many Children Still Waiting

Make Quality Early Learning Top Priority In 2017 Budget

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 2017 EXECUTIVE BUDGET

EXPAND ACCESS TO FULL-DAY QUALITY PRE-K

- **Add at least \$150 million to expand access to quality pre-K outside of New York City, with priority to high needs districts and neighborhoods, including:**
 - \$125 million to expand access to pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds.
 - \$25 million to assist programs in meeting high quality standards.
- **Re-appropriate the full \$22 million for pre-K in the 2016 budget and open eligibility to 4s in 2017.**

REFORM PRE-K FINANCING

- **Convert the \$25 million in Priority Pre-K to aid formula distributed by allocation, like other education funding, as the first step in protecting existing pre-K services and moving the state toward a coherent and sustainable funding strategy.**

EXPAND ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILD CARE

- **Invest \$100 million to expand access to child care subsidies for working families.**
- **Invest at least \$56 million to meet the initial costs of new federal regulations in 2017, which aim to improve health and safety.**

KEEP THE PROMISE FOR FULL-DAY PRE-K

Every 4-Year-Old Deserves the Opportunity to Succeed in School

In 2014, Governor Cuomo made a bold pledge to fund all school districts that created a plan to offer quality, full-day pre-K. The pledge was the first step in the plan to make full-day pre-K available to all 4-year-olds in New York State. We applaud both the goal and the pledge. We agree with national media and policymakers who have given New York significant attention for setting that agenda. The initial state investment that year of \$340 million – with \$300 earmarked for New York City’s bold Pre-K for All initiative – was groundbreaking. **But the pledge has not been kept.**

INVEST AT LEAST \$150 MILLION TO EXPAND ACCESS TO QUALITY PRE-K OUTSIDE OF NEW YORK CITY IN THE 2017 BUDGET

Since then Governor Cuomo has included some new investment in pre-K in each annual budget. Starting in 2015, he added 3-year-olds to the program, with only modest new investment. In 2016, the Governor again added a modest new investment targeted for 3-year-olds. The strategy has increased the inequity between New York City – which now has more than 70,000 4-year-olds enrolled in full-day pre-K and the rest of the state. Today only 19 percent of the 4-year-olds outside the City – about 20,000 – have access to full-day pre-K.² The inequity persists even though many districts came forward with a plan. The reason: The investment for the rest of the state lagged far behind New York City.

“It is disconcerting that we use the term “universal” in describing New York State’s pre-K programming, yet less than 15 percent of our entering kindergarten students have access to those early learning opportunities,” says Dr. James Montesano, Superintendent, Nyack School District. “Our number of economically disadvantaged students has increased by 9 percent over the past five years – yet our ability to provide access to early childhood programs has remained stagnant.”

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES: 4-YEAR OLDS WITHOUT FULL-DAY PRE-K BY COMMUNITY

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Southern Tier	3,488	62%
Western New York	8,221	69%

Today, 81 percent of the state's 4-year-olds outside of New York City – more than 106,000 – are still waiting for a full-day seat.

The current inequities in access for 4-year-olds across the state are striking (see economic development regions chart below) and unacceptable. Some are in inner-ring suburbs, where poverty is rising. Others are in rural communities, where full-day pre-K is an essential – schools and families alike report a part-day service simply doesn't work when children must travel a distance to attend a program.

The inequity is keenly felt across communities outside of New York City. In a letter to the Governor in late 2016, Nassau and Suffolk superintendents called for more investment in pre-K in the 2017 budget. They noted "New York State has allocated \$417 million to pre-K programs through competitive grants since 2013. Less than \$10 million came to Long Island school districts," in late 2016. "The needs of Long Island suburban children must be heard."

The state must take the next significant step forward and invest \$125 million to expand access to full-day pre-K, building on the base of the current investment of \$803 million.

It is disconcerting that we use the term "universal" in describing New York State's pre-K programming, yet less than 15 percent of our entering kindergarten students have access to those early learning opportunities.

Dr. James Montesano, Superintendent,
Nyack School District

RE-APPROPRIATE THE FULL \$22 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR PRE-K IN THE 2016 BUDGET AND OPEN ELIGIBILITY TO 4'S IN 2017

The adopted 2016 budget added \$22 million for new competitive grants to support pre-K for 3-year-olds. This approach, proposed by the Governor and supported by the legislature froze funding for 4-year-olds, leaving thousands of children outside New York City without access to quality full-day pre-K and many school officials and parents disappointed. The unfairness of this decision has been perhaps felt most sharply by school leaders and parents living in the New York City suburbs where, on their local radio stations, they constantly hear New York City touting its Pre-K for All program.³

The 2016 appropriation was not only limited to 3-year-olds, but also only open to districts that already had a successful pre-K program in place for 4s. The new funding was also a stretch for many districts not yet experienced in serving the young children because it came without infrastructure, start-up or technical assistance and professional development. Some districts also failed to reach out to local community programs to tap their expertise and capacity. As a result, even though 50 districts applied, only 25 won awards. It is clear that demand for pre-K remains strong, but many were not ready to offer a quality service, particularly given the limited supports offered under the funding scheme. State leaders must protect this funding in 2017; the money should be re-appropriated to be used only for pre-K and open to districts to serve 4s.

INVEST \$25 MILLION TO SUPPORT PRE-K QUALITY INITIATIVES

Under the competitive grants program, the state strengthened the pre-K standards, raising the bar on quality. We fully support the establishment of high quality standards. However, many districts and programs still lack the resources and infrastructure to meet those benchmarks. The state still needs to make the appropriate investment in effective teaching and classroom support to assure that all districts, programs and staff have the resources and tools they need to meet these benchmarks. A growing body of evidence documents the importance of such supports and coaching and mentoring, assessment and developmentally-appropriate practice. Both school leaders and early childhood programs in the community can benefit from such supports. Regional leaders have already created some promising models and strategies, working with BOCES and local child care resource and referral agencies.⁴

It is important to add funds particularly targeted to quality assurance strategies as the state expansion of pre-K continues. The quality set aside of \$25 million is essential and the plan should include investments in professional development, coaching and mentoring and other evidence-based methods that help programs meet quality benchmarks. These efforts should be aligned with the state's quality rating and improvement system, QUALITYstarsNY.



REFORM PRE-K FINANCING: CONVERT PRIORITY PRE-K FUNDING TO AN AID FORMULA

In 2013, the Governor introduced competitive grants as a new pre-K financing strategy, breaking away from the use of allocation formulas like other education services. Competitive grants now account for \$417 million, and have led to the creation of seven separate pre-K funding streams (see Appendices A and B for background). Each competitive grant expires after five years, putting the funding at risk for the long-term.

The \$25 million Priority Pre-K funding grants will be the first to expire, in the 2017-18 school year. The executive budget must maintain the level of funding and convert it to an aid formula distributed via annual allocation like other education funding. This action will assure more than 6,000 existing full-day pre-K seats in 26 districts created by Priority Pre-K continue in the 2017 school year and beyond.

This action will also represent the first critical step to move the state toward a coherent and sustainable pre-K financing strategy as it moves toward truly universal pre-K. The use of annual competitive grants is cumbersome, time-consuming and impeded timely implementation for the winners and leaves many of the most challenged districts behind. It is time to shift to a simplified and appropriate pre-K allocation formula, starting with the \$25 million Priority Pre-K grant that expires in the 2017-18 school year.

“More and more districts are interested in prekindergarten and especially full-day prekindergarten,” says Lucinda Hurley, executive director of Strategic Initiatives at Nassau BOCES, which launched the Long Island Pre-K Initiative several years ago to work with districts eager to add pre-K. But she adds, the challenges with the lack of predictable, and appropriate funding – that is funding that “really covers the costs of pre-K” hold school officials back.

GETTING IT RIGHT FOR 3-YEAR-OLDS: The expansion of pre-K for 3s is a positive step, but **cannot be a substitute for meeting the promise of 4-year-olds.**

Strong research findings document the value of starting early with children especially those considered high-risk because of family circumstances. Offering two years of preschool can lead to larger gains for children.⁵ States can produce even better outcomes when the services start early and are aligned, from birth through school age.⁶

The state’s modest investment in pre-K in 2016 – just \$22 million for the whole state and restricted only for 3-year-olds – did spark interest in districts already serving 4-year-olds. But for a second year in a row, the state failed to adjust the rates to address the specific needs of 3-year-olds as set forth in the state’s Early Learning Guidelines, including smaller class size as well as teacher preparation and additional social supports necessary for serving at risk children. There was no funding for technical assistance, in how to effectively launch a program for 3s and to provide the appropriate classroom environment. Now that 3-year-olds are part of the state’s pre-K effort, it is critical to address these fundamental issues and ensure districts have the resources they need to do it right.

There is substantial experience in working with 3s in early childhood programs in the community who have served 3-year-olds for decades but have not yet been tapped by their local districts for pre-K expansion. Any new educational investment in 3-year-olds must also require local districts to engage and collaborate with community-based programs.

EXPAND ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILD CARE

Another Key Investment in School Readiness and Economic Opportunity

Quality child care and pre-K are companion investments which strengthen the state's efforts to ensure that every child is ready to succeed in school. Child care programs offer year-round services, serve babies and toddlers and meet the needs of working families. As an additional investment, child care funding offers another critical strategy to boost school readiness and expand economic opportunities across New York, by keeping children learning and parents earning.

INVEST \$100 MILLION TO EXPAND ACCESS TO CHILD CARE SUBSIDIES FOR WORKING FAMILIES

A disturbing **83 percent** of low-income children eligible for a child care subsidy do not get one, creating a significant crisis for families and children.

Two-thirds of all families are now headed by parents in the workforce, and most of these parents work full-time by the time their children are three. But the cost of quality care is simply out of reach. New York is now home to the highest costs for child care in the country,⁷ with the average fee for care services estimated at \$14,000 per year with costs varying substantially by regions across the state.⁸ Care for children under 3 is even more expensive. Working mothers with young children are more likely than workers overall to be in low-wage jobs. Child care takes half the income of low-income working parents.⁹ The cost of child care also produces financial hardship in middle-class and professional families, rivaling tuition at a public college at a time when they themselves may still be paying off their own college loans.



INVEST AT LEAST \$56 MILLION TO MEET NEW STANDARDS

New York must meet the initial costs of new federal health and safety standards, including new training and background checks for programs and providers – estimated to be at least \$56 million. **Without new state investment, at least 21,000 slots could be lost across New York. This is not a trade-off that children and families – or our communities – can afford.** Meeting new quality standards must not come at the expense of access.

Unable to afford quality care in a stable program, parents face difficult choices. Few can afford to stop working, so their option, increasingly, is to make-do with make-shift arrangements that often fall-through, disrupting their children's learning power along with their earning power.¹⁰ "I had to change my time, arrive late, miss days of work and my overall work performance was negatively impacted," one mother reported. "It is unfair to the middle-class," another parent said "We pay taxes and parents should be able to receive help with their children's education. Parents are struggling."

On paper, New York's official policy is to offer a subsidy to working parents earning up to 200 percent of poverty and to ensure that all families on public assistance have the child care they need to achieve economic independence. In real-life terms, that means a family of three earning up to \$40,180 is eligible for subsidized care. Those families who meet that income cutoff but are denied access because of lack of state funds must scrape together anything close to \$14,000 a year for quality care – from an income of \$40,000, an impossibility for most.



Without new state investment, at least 21,000 slots could be lost across New York. This is not a trade-off that children and families – or our communities – can afford.

It is imperative that the state steps up to the plate on this critical investment. Children and families have nowhere else to turn. There is what advocates call a “perfect storm” under way, driven by diminished state and federal investment. “More and more working families are being squeezed out of the program, stretching New York’s child care to the breaking point,” the Empire Justice Center reports.¹¹



The state cap on taxes and local municipal aid makes it even more challenging each year. Many counties simply run out of child care funding before the end of the fiscal year. As a result, they have tightened eligibility, raised co-pays and stopped serving new families. Some have simply stopped taking applications. Such was the case in Erie County this fall, which put a freeze on subsidies, and simply stopped accepting applications. “It is a very difficult time for some families,” Kim Stewart, director of the Children’s Center for Success in Buffalo told the local media at a rally for child care late last year. Her center has a waiting list of 50 families, and they share their stories with her. “They’ve had to turn down jobs, they are struggling to piece together child care with family, relatives or friends to try to make it work until the freeze is lifted.”

Child care resource and referral agencies, as well as advocates and school districts across the state, which work with both programs and parents, report that a growing number are closing their doors, and many report it increasingly difficult to attract, retain and appropriately support staff.¹²

Early childhood educators, the heart of quality for any early childhood program, still face miserably low wages. In a few communities, most notably in New York City and Rochester, new full-day funding for pre-K helped to improve that situation. But with so little new pre-K funding outside of New York City, and the minimum wage now rising, many programs are finding it harder than ever to attract staff and keep their doors open. “Quality of care is a function of the ability to maintain highly-qualified personnel,” says one program director in New York City. “I would say (low) salaries and health benefits are driving potential hires away from our program.”¹³

The sense of the crisis is growing around the state. This fall, the Early Care and Learning Council launched a bold campaign, #FundChildCare, and drew hundreds of programs and local parents in a call for more investment in child care.¹⁴

In Rochester, the faith community made child care a top priority. “Thousands of faith members, across many religions, are calling for change to bring about a better future for our children,” said Najmah Abdulmateen, of the Islamic Center of Rochester. “We are all responding to the moral imperatives demanded of us by our faith traditions, and drawing on our moral authority to say that we need to do better for our next generation.”

WHY INVEST IN EARLY LEARNING?

The News Just Keeps Getting Better

The evidence for state investment in early learning is clear and compelling: But this winter, the case grew stronger, with the release of a brand-new study by Nobel laureate economist James Heckman showing a remarkable return on investment – **13 percent a year** – over the course of a child’s life cycle.¹⁵

That beats the stock market - by a lot.

It also beats the return on most other public investments in economic development, from convention centers to stadiums to casinos.

These latest findings add new momentum to the already-significant body of research which documents the benefits of investing in quality early learning programs - for children, families, schools, communities and taxpayers:¹⁶

- Children who attend high-quality early learning programs are more likely to enter kindergarten ready to succeed, be reading on grade level by third grade, graduate high school, go on to college and have higher earnings as adults.
- Parents can be more productive workers and increase their earnings.
- Employers can attract and retain employees, with affordable child care and pre-K the new “must-haves” for middle class families.
- Communities have more economic activity, less crime, more successful schools and stable families.
- Taxpayers see a return of at least \$7-10 on every dollar invested. Federal Reserve economists – as well as Nobel-Laureate economist James Heckman – say there is simply no better public investment to be made - it even beats the stock market.¹⁷ The return on the typical economic development projects – from sports stadiums to convention centers – simply can’t match the benefits that accrue from one that supports children’s early learning and development.

We know that 80% of brain development happens in the earliest years of life. We have seen the positive impact of full-day Pre-Kindergarten in Ossining. This program is a game changer as it supports equal outcomes for all. Early childhood is critical to every child’s success!

Raymond Sanchez, Superintendent,
Ossining Union Free School District

The savings to the school system are particularly notable and supported by education leaders.¹⁸

No wonder that pediatricians, business leaders, law enforcement and clergy are all speaking up, along with parents, early childhood and public school educators and advocates, in favor of new state investment in quality early learning opportunities. “The state must step up and invest state dollars to assure all child care and early education programs are high-quality and accessible,” says Warren Siegel, chair of the New York State chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

CONSEQUENCES OF NOT INVESTING: RISING INEQUALITY ACROSS THE STATE

The consequences of NOT investing in early education – in both the short- and long-term are also well-documented.¹⁹ Children without access to quality early learning opportunities are more likely to start out kindergarten behind their more affluent peers, up to two years behind. They are also likely to stay behind right through their elementary and secondary years. The costs to them – and all New Yorkers – are also notable. High school drop-outs are likely to have few job opportunities, low earnings and nearly twice as likely to be arrested. Research shows that at-risk children left out of quality pre-Kindergarten are five times more likely to engage in criminal activity by age 27 than children attending quality pre-kindergarten.

Those consequences are felt acutely in communities around the state, especially those once seen as a refuge from urban poverty. Long Island is a perfect example of these trends. On Long Island experts confirm that in the last decade the Island has experienced a 9 percent rise in poverty among children under the age of 6. This is now reflected in the growing number of children showing up for kindergarten unprepared to succeed. This trend has prompted school leaders in both Nassau and Suffolk to call on Governor Cuomo to expand pre-K funding dramatically for Long Island's 4-year-olds.²⁰ "The needs of Long Island's children must be heard," they declared. Similarly, early childhood advocates have joined county officials in calling for more investment in quality child care as another avenue to level the playing field for the rising number of children in poverty. "Long Island's economic growth requires we retain and attract more young families and create more avenues for upward mobility," they wrote.

Research shows that just two years of high quality early care and education improve children's lifelong success, and low-income children derive the biggest gains. This makes child care a vital part of the continuum connecting New York State's twin accomplishments of our new Paid Family Leave law and expanded pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds. But, due to years of under-investment in child care assistance for low-income families, that continuum urgently needs reinforcing to ensure the promised benefits.

Larry Marx, The Children's Agenda

Research documents that children living in poverty are far more likely to grow up to be adults in poverty. They are shut out from social networks and enrichment opportunities available to more affluent families.²¹

It is an even more serious concern, given that New York now leads the nation in income inequality. The divide is simply the most extreme in the nation, and is growing more so, each year.²² Many experts expect the trend to accelerate, if New York does not take action.²³

That leaves it up to our state leaders, especially Governor Cuomo, to take the lead in protecting the youngest and most vulnerable New Yorkers. **Too many New Yorkers are "left out and left behind," as the governor stated. He has taken several important steps to support young children and their families, including paid family leave and initial investments to expand full-day pre-K. But it is time to do more.**

Endnotes

- ¹ See summary of research in "The Economics of Early Childhood Investments," White House Council of Economic Advisors, January 2015.
- ² Data on current enrollment from New York State Educational Department, December 2016.
- ³ Statements from local school leaders, parents, early childhood advocates and local elected officials gathered from Child Care Resources of Rockland County, the Westchester Child Care Council and especially at policy forums and meetings hosted by the Long Island Pre-K Initiative.
- ⁴ Child Care Resources of Rockland County administers pre-K for seven districts in Rockland County and offers technical assistance and professional development, working closely with the local BOCES. For more information, contact Jane Brown, executive director at janeb@rocklandchildcare.org. The Nassau BOCES supports the Long Island Pre-K Initiative which has prepared a proposal and model for technical assistance and support, Contact Lucinda Hurley at lhurley@nassauboces.org.
- ⁵ See the landmark study, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*, published by the National Academy of Science, at www.nas.edu. Also, see Abbott Preschool Program Longitudinal Effects Study (APPLES) at www.nieer.org for benefits of offering pre-K to 3- and 4-year-olds.
- ⁶ For the latest research, see the Education Commission on the States at www.ecs.org. Also see the Foundation for Child Development's research on P-3 early learning, at www.fcd-us.org.
- ⁷ Child Care Aware 2016, annual study affordability of child care, at www.Childcareaware.org.
- ⁸ Research conducted by CGR, Inc, 2014 for the League of Women Voters, at www.cgr.org.
- ⁹ Blank, Schulman and Frohlich, study working mothers in low-wage jobs, 2014, at www.nwlc.org.
- ¹⁰ See "What Happens When There Is No Subsidy," study by the Center for Children's Initiatives, www.ccinyc.org.
- ¹¹ See "Still Mending the Patchwork," Empire Justice Center at www.empirejustice.org.
- ¹² Interviews conducted starting in fall of 2014 and represent the on-the-ground experience in communities in Rochester, Buffalo, Albany, Hudson Valley, New York City and Long Island. While there is always considerable turnover in early childhood programs because of the under-funding, the reports were that even the most stable and long-term and high-quality programs face challenges because of the lack of public investment.
- ¹³ Campaign for Children Survey, January 2015.
- ¹⁴ The Early Care and Learning Council which represents the state's network of child care resource and referral agencies launched its #FundChildCare social media campaign in the fall of 2016, based on a growing sense of urgency about the lack of access to quality child care. For more information on the range of experiences, county by county, that parents and programs are facing, contact Jesssica Klos at jklos@earlycareandlearning.com.
- ¹⁵ See James Heckman's most recent study at www.heckmanequation.org.
- ¹⁶ "The Economics of Early Childhood Investments," White House Council of Economic Advisors, January 2015.
- ¹⁷ In December, 2016, Heckman released his latest study, showing the returns "beat the stock market," and posted it at www.heckmanequation.org.
- ¹⁸ See Clive Belfield's study specific to new York State, "Early Childhood Education: How Important Are the Cost-Savings to the School System" available at www.scaany.org/resources/documents/wbny_newspdf. Belfield has since found similar results in studies of other states.
- ¹⁹ See the Council for a Strong America's website, www.strongnation.org.
- ²⁰ Memo on Long Island Pre-K Funding, to NYS Legislative leaders on August 29, 2016, from Nassau and Suffolk Councils of School Superintendents. Shared with Governor's staff in December 2016.
- ²¹ Davis, Elizabeth E, Grobe, Deana, and Weber, Roberta B. cited in Whitehouse summary above. See also Research Report from Children's Defense Fund, 2015, Ending Child Poverty Now. www.childrensdefense.org.
- ²² Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI) analysis, released June 14, 2016. as part of the Economic Analysis and Research Network., based on report, Income Inequality in the US by state, metropolitan area and county. Available at www.fiscalpolicy.org.
- ²³ Bernstein, Jared and Spielberg, "Inequality Matters," The Atlantic, June 5, 2015.

APPENDIX A: NEW YORK STATE PREKINDERGARTEN FUNDING (\$803 million: 118,000 children enrolled)

Recurring Formula Based Allocation (\$386M)

	Targeted Pre-K (1966) ¹	Universal Pre-K (1997)	Priority Pre-K (2015)	Statewide Full-Day Pre-K (2014)	Competitive Grants (\$417M)	High Need 3- and 4-Year-Olds (2016)
Number of Participating Districts	3 BOCES	444 School Districts	25 School Districts	53 School Districts + 26 CBO's	34 School Districts	25 School Districts
Current Annual Appropriation²	\$1.3M	\$385M	\$25M	\$340M (\$300M NYC, \$40M ROS)	\$30M	\$22M (Only \$10.4M awarded)
Number Children Served	308	100,416	6,054 students	31,680 (NYC) ⁴ 5,000 (ROS)	1,277 (4s); 2,018 (3s)	1,500 3-year-olds
Rates Per Child³	Folded into UPK in 2007-2008, follow same rates	Formula based on state school aid, usually half the aid per child - with minimum set at \$2,700 per child ⁵	Formula based on UPK, with rate doubled for full-day	\$10,000, with certified teacher; \$7,000, with teacher in study plan to obtain certification	Formula based on UPK, with rate doubled for full-day	Formula based on UPK, with rate doubled for full-day
Length of Day	Half-Day or Full-Day no rate differential ⁶	Half-Day or Full-Day no rate differential ⁶	Half-Day or Full-Day	Full-Day	Half-Day or Full-Day	Half-Day or Full-Day
Child Eligibility	High-need 3s and 4s	All 4s	High-need 4s	All 4s	High-need 3s and 4s	High-need 3s
Governance	BOCES in public schools	School Districts, with mandate for collaboration with CBO's	School Districts, with mandate for collaboration with CBO's	School District, with new option for individual entities (Charters added)	School Districts, with mandate for collaboration with CBO's	School Districts, with mandate for collaboration with CBO's
Funding Strategy	Recurring grant	Recurring formula-based, non-competitive grant	Competitive grant in year 1, renewed based on meeting performance targets	Competitive grant, with regional funding targets	Competitive grant, based on Priority Pre-K framework	Competitive grant, based on Priority Pre-K framework
District Eligibility⁸			Renewed based on meeting performance target	Renewed based on meeting performance target		
Financing Strategy	Periodic Payments in year services are delivered	Periodic Payments in year services are delivered	Periodic payments in year services are delivered	Delayed Reimbursement in year 1; After year 1, districts receive 25% upfront for following year	Periodic payments in year services are delivered	Periodic payments in year services are delivered

*The original funding chart was prepared by The New York State Education Department, and adapted by the Center for Children's Initiatives, 2016, for discussion purposes only. For more information, contact bholcomb@cccinc.org.

¹ Started as Experimental Pre-K, largely folded into Universal Pre-K in 1997, except 3 BOCES.
² Current as of the 2016 state enacted budget.

³ The numbers of children are those that are supported by each funding stream. The numbers do not necessarily add up to the total number of children enrolled in state pre-k programs, since some districts are "fully implemented" and agree to accept all 4-year-olds who apply, even if state pre-k funding does not cover the costs. In exchange, those districts are exempt from maintenance of effort requirements. In other cases, districts have used federal funding, such as Title I, to cover pre-K services or to use local tax levy funds. In addition, some children are supported by more than one funding stream, when part-day seats are converted to full-day. In those cases, students may be supported by UPK and full-day funding, as well as other state pre-K funding.

⁴ The enrollment numbers in the chart represent the first year of implementation of the new state grant. The City's enrollment in Pre-K for All is now more than 70,000.
⁵ Universal Pre-K has two sets of rates. One is for the enrollment prior to 2008; the second is for the expansion that took place in 2008, when the program nearly doubled in size. Districts must maintain the original enrollment to be eligible for the second.

⁶ Half-day is defined as at least 2.5 hours. Full-day must be at least 5 hours. Some districts, including NYC, define full-day as full school-day of 6 hours and 20 minutes.

⁷ Started as Experimental Pre-K, largely folded into Universal Pre-K in 2007-2008, except 3 BOCES.

⁸ All pre-K programs are subject to annual appropriations being made in state budget.

APPENDIX B: THE REGENTS 2017-18 PROPOSAL ON STATE AID TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS: RECOMMENDATIONS ON PREKINDERGARTEN*

The Board of Regents has long championed early childhood education, with investment in quality prekindergarten as a key investment to ensure all children are prepared to succeed in school and life.

Each year, the Regents offer a proposal for state aid in the state budget. This year's proposal makes the investment in prekindergarten a "priority investment," in addition to foundation aid. The pre-K recommendations are aligned with advocates' agenda for pre-K; it includes additional investment in full-day pre-K outside New York City to correct the current inequity between the City and the Rest of State, as well as recommendations to reform to pre-K financing:

EXPAND AND ALIGN THE STATE'S PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

Research has shown that early childhood programs that incorporate certain key elements are an effective way to enable students to begin school ready to learn and to close the early preparedness gaps that cause some children to struggle throughout their school careers. To address this need, the Board recommends expanding New York's investment in early childhood programs by \$100 million in 2017-2018. This expansion would be based on at least \$10,000 per child level that has been used to support expansions of early childhood programs in recent years. The Board recommends that the State align the existing prekindergarten programs to create a single program that:

- Continues funding for Priority Prekindergarten (PPK) programs that are set to expire on June 30, 2018, as well as for the other Prekindergarten grants that expire annually thereafter;
- Provides funding at \$10,000/per pupil for full day programs or two times a district's Universal Prekindergarten allocation, whichever is higher;
- Allocates aid according to a need-weighted formula, not through a competitive procurement;
- Aligns all existing programs with one allocation methodology that ensures high-quality programming and stable long term funding; and
- Provides consistent, rigorous quality standards, streamlined data reporting methodologies, and amended regulations that reflect the current research on quality early education regarding staffing, curriculum, facilities, and other areas. The Department recommends that all of the State's prekindergarten programs be brought into alignment with the quality requirements of the PPK program.

The Board's recommendation for a \$100 million expansion in 2017-2018 for early childhood programs will allow a significant increase in the number of seats available to four year-old children. The Board also recommends a similar increase for the following year to dramatically reduce the number of four year olds around New York State who lack access to high-quality prekindergarten programs.

Under the proposed model, the state would align the elements of the current programs with the high standards set under the PPK program and, as a result support for some existing prekindergarten programs must be increased. Providing at least a per pupil amount of \$10,000 would result in fewer new seats being available for the first year, but would provide improved quality of existing programs. Once existing prekindergarten seats are funded to provide a high quality experience, available funds would be used to expand quality programs to all children. The current programs have been focused on the districts that serve high-need children, the children that research has shown gain the most from participation in strong early learning programs, so additional support for quality in districts with existing programs will have direct benefits to closing school readiness gaps for our youngest learners. As the

program expands over time, the State should ensure that every child has access to early childhood classrooms with the following research-supported characteristics:

- Teachers who are certified in early childhood education and well- prepared to teach our youngest learners, dedicated to their work in early childhood settings, and strong in the areas of cultural responsiveness and family engagement;
- Developmentally-appropriate activities;
- Alignment to developmentally appropriate early childhood standards through New York’s Pre-K Foundation of Learning Standards;
- Linkages to the school-age curriculum that provide good transitions to kindergarten; and
- Effective evaluation practices that keep programs moving toward excellence.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS RECEIVING PRIORITY PRE-K FUNDING

	Number of 4-Year-Olds Served**
Albany	122
Green Island	20
Watervilet City SD	18
Binghamton	119
Jamestown city SD	186
Buffalo City SD	126
Central Valley	128
Dansville CSD	50
Rochester	1,454
New York City	2,854
Lockport	36
Solvay	39
Geneva	59
Oswego	34
East Ramapo	250
Schenectedy City SD	90
Schoharie	50
Odessa-Montour	30
Bath	108
Campbell-Savona CSD	36
Monticello	38
Clyde-Savannah	44
Lyons CSD	44
North Rose-Wolcott	57
Peekskill	62
Total:	6,054

* The Regents’ full proposal includes the full range of investment in aid to school districts they envision to meet the needs of New York State’s students, Pre-K to 12. The recommendation on prekindergarten is included under “Priority Investments” in the aid proposal, available at <https://www.regents.nysed.gov/>

**Projected enrollment as of 2015, data from NY State Education Department.

THE SMART CHOICE:

Invest in Quality Early Learning in 2017

Simply put, the case is clear for investment in child care and pre-K expanding early learning opportunities. If we fail to do so it will cost too much and require major investments in remediation going forward. These investments are a game changer for children, families and the schools. Children can't wait. New York State can take significant steps to get it right for children and their families from the start.

*For more information on this report,
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