



Final Budget Compromise Must Restore All Child Welfare Funds #NoCuts4Kids

Child welfare preventive services, foster care, kinship and adoption programs are essential for our communities to recover from COVID-19 crisis

March 17, 2021. The New York State Child Welfare Coalition and CHAMPS-NY, two statewide coalitions comprised of policy advocates, service providers, and caregivers who advance policy and practice change in the child welfare system, ***call on the Governor and the State Legislature to address the heightened needs of children and families, supporting family stability and child safety, by rejecting proposed funding cuts and maintaining State support for ALL child welfare services.***

During the months initially following the pandemic, 4,200 of New York’s children lost a parent or guardian to COVID-19—that is one out of every 1,000 children. Black and Latinx children experienced the death of a parent or caregiver at twice the rate of white children, and over half of all children who experienced such profound loss live in New York City.ⁱ Poverty – the major driver of child welfare-system involvement – is deepening for many of New York’s families. The share of children in New York State with an unemployed parent tripled over the summer to nearly 1 in 4.ⁱⁱ This is the wrong time to cut programs and services that support children and families. We can’t balance the budget on the backs of our most vulnerable communities.

New York’s leaders must enact a budget that restores all State funding for:

- Child welfare services including preventive, protective, and independent living services at the existing state/county share of cost;
- Kinship caregiver and kinship navigator services; and
- The foster care block grant.

We were encouraged by the State Legislature’s restoration of funding for community-based child welfare supports and county grants to serve children and youth who are justice-system involved. The time is now to demonstrate the same commitment to child safety and family stability by extending a full restoration of cuts to ALL child welfare programs. Our statewide coalition members stand ready to help achieve this goal.

“New York’s children and families are enduring a sustained period of precarity, especially Black and Latinx communities hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is unimaginable that we would pass a budget that diminishes state funding for resources intended to support family stability and reduce the number of children in foster care. The governor and the legislature must center the

needs of families by rejecting these cuts in the final budget." Julia Davis, Director of Youth Justice & Child Welfare, Children's Defense Fund-New York.

"Throughout the pandemic, prevention service programs have been a lifeline for New York's children and families responding to multiple stressors that come with social isolation and heightened economic food and housing insecurity, by addressing these needs as well as barriers to remote learning and increased health and behavioral health needs," said Jennifer March, executive director of Citizens' Committee for Children of New York. "Investments in children and families now are the key to New York's recovery. As the State Budget for fiscal year 2022 is finalized, we are calling on State leaders to reject proposed reductions to state reimbursement for child welfare services and prioritize investment that keep children safe and families together."

"Now is not the time to cut back on our efforts to support families that have undergone tremendous challenges throughout the pandemic," said Kathleen Brady-Stepien, President and CEO of the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA). "These services promote children's safety and well-being. New York's counties cannot keep taking on more of the cost of crucial services to prevent child maltreatment and foster care placement; preserving state funding for these services is critical and necessary. We urge the Legislature and the Governor to include this important funding to support New York families in the final state budget."

"Countless New Yorkers have fallen into poverty, many children have lost their parents, and in our efforts to social distance, families are isolated from the natural supports they need to thrive. In a time of historic need, in an area of funding dedicated to those of us in the greatest need historically, anything short of bold investments in services that help families and children navigate through this crisis is unconscionable; cutting these services is unforgivable." Paige Pierce, CEO of Families Together in New York State.

"New York families have endured a year of extraordinary stress. Child welfare preventive services provide crucial support for families that help mitigate the impacts of stress, and set children up to thrive. Without these services, we'll see more families separated, with children placed in foster care. This is not the time to cut funding for preventive services as proposed in the Executive budget," explained Kate Breslin, President and CEO of the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy. "To help New York families recover from this crisis intact and together, we urge the Senate and Governor to follow the Assembly's lead and make sure preventive services are fully funded in the final budget."

For more information, please contact the New York State Child Welfare Coalition and CHAMPS-NY Coalition leads:

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ⁱ United Hospital Fund, *COVID-19 Ripple Effect: The Impact of COVID-19 on Children in New York State*, September 2020.

ⁱⁱ Parolin, Zachary. 2020. "Share of Children with Unemployed Parents Reach Historic Highs During the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Poverty and Social Policy Brief*. Center on Poverty and Social Policy, Columbia University. Vol. 4, no. 10.