

In Celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, The Children's Defense Fund – New York Releases Its 2022 Legislative and Budget Agenda

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New York, N.Y. – Today, as a part of its celebration of the life and world-changing legacy of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., renowned civil rights activist and one of the greatest nonviolent leaders in world history, the Children's Defense Fund – New York (CDF-NY) releases its Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Legislative and Budget Agenda, titled [*Prioritizing the Needs of Children, Youth and Families: New York State Budget and Legislative Priorities*](#). We do so following in the footsteps of CDF's Founder & President Emerita Marian Wright Edelman, who served as counsel for the Poor People Campaign, a campaign that Dr. King started organizing for before he died. Our wide-ranging and whole child 2022 priorities for improving the health and well-being of New York's young people encompass CDF-NY's policy priorities of Racial Justice, Economic Mobility, Health Justice, Youth Justice, Education Justice, Child Welfare and Voting Rights.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spotlight and exacerbate longstanding inequities disproportionately impacting New York's children, youth and families of color, CDF-NY's legislative and budget priorities provide a blueprint for a bold new vision for marginalized children, youth and families to thrive. Today and every day, CDF-NY urges New York to advance policies that promote racial equity and center the needs of the youngest New Yorkers, their families and their communities, recognizing, as Dr. King wrote in his 1963 *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* that we are all "caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny."

As Governor Hochul prepares to release her 2022 Executive Budget, CDF-NY remains guided by Dr. King's ever potent reminder to be "the conscience of the state...the guide and the critic of the state" and stands alongside our powerful young people in presenting these legislative priorities to New York's elected leaders and reminding them that budgets are moral documents.

"Two weeks before his assassination, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said that America must 'use her vast resources of wealth to end poverty and make it possible for all of God's children to have the basic necessities of life.' As the state with the third largest economy in the nation, in our 2022 Legislative and Budget Agenda, CDF-NY calls for a radical redistribution of our state's economic resources in ways that prioritize the needs of the 800,000 children living in poverty in New York State and the needs of the marginalized communities in which they reside – which are disproportionately communities of color," said [**Kercena A. Dozier, Executive Director of the Children's Defense Fund – New York**](#). "As Governor

Hochul prepares to release her Executive Budget, CDF-NY urges her and our state legislature to use their power this session to support a revolution of ‘child first’ budgetary and legislative values in support of our Racial Justice, Economic Mobility, Health Justice, Youth Justice, Education Justice, Child Welfare and Voting Rights agenda. The future of our state depends on the racial justice and racial equity actions it takes today for our impacted young people and their communities.”

CDF-NY is the New York office of the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF), the only national, multi-issue advocacy organization working at the intersection of child well-being and racial justice. CDF envisions a nation where marginalized children flourish, leaders prioritize their well-being, and communities wield the power to ensure they thrive, and strives to advance the well-being of America’s most diverse generation – the 74 million children and youth under the age of 18 and 30 million young adults under the age of 25. CDF’s grassroots movements in marginalized communities build power for child-centered public policy, informed by racial equity and the lived experience of children and youth.

Read CDF-NY’s 2022 Legislative & Budget Agenda [here](#).

“A society that does not care for the welfare of its children cannot be considered great no matter how technologically advanced, how mighty its armed forces, or how enormous its annual budget may be,” said **Rev. Michael Livingston, Interim Senior Minister of The Riverside Church**. “Our nation fails our most vulnerable children miserably on almost every major standard we could consider: housing, public education, health care. On MLK Jr. Day, CDF-NY is releasing its budget priorities for 2022, among them child welfare, racial, health, and youth justice, voting rights and economic mobility. As Marian Wright Edelman has said, ‘A lot of people are waiting for Martin Luther King or Mahatma Gandhi to come back – but they are gone. We are it. It is up to us. It is up to you.’ The NY State legislative agenda is not just some complicated political document—it is a moral blueprint for how our state will address the most critical needs of the citizens of our state. It will have a huge impact on the quality of life of our children. I urge you to become familiar with the priorities named by the CDF of NY State. Then—contact your representatives and raise your voice in support of these priorities—join with others to go to Albany to advocate for our children! It’s up to us.”

“Almost 50 years from its founding, the Children’s Defense Fund continues to lead the way in placing children first,” said **Rev. Kaji Douša, Senior Minister and C.E.O. of Park Avenue Christian Church**. “As a Christian pastor, I value how clearly Jesus centered children first - and so must we. CDF-NY’s policy priorities would make Jesus proud.”

"On MLK Day 2022, I join other diverse faith leaders around New York City in welcoming CDF-NY's New York State 2022 Legislative & Budget Priorities Agenda," said **Rev. Dr. Chloe Breyer, Executive Director of The Interfaith Center of New York**. "Its practical proposals for improving healthcare for poor children and their families, strengthening educational opportunities, increasing economic mobility, and expanding voting rights are all foundational steps for building the just society that Dr. King fought for so many years ago. With its advocacy platforms and commitment to implementing them, CDF-NY counts itself among those ‘willing to be co-workers with God,’ whose tireless efforts bring us all closer to the Beloved Community that Dr. King envisioned.”

“CDF-NY’s 2022 budget and legislative priorities expand the legacy and solve for the unfinished work of the Civil Rights Movement, making sturdy the economic floor for our families and guaranteeing forward-facing health and education outcomes for youth,” said **Willie Dwayne Francois III, Senior Pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church**. “This is what treating the people’s needs as holy looks like. Budgets and

legislation are moral documents that expose the heart of the state and soul of our politics. CDF-NY's demands for equity and repair related to children ask for the creation of a new heart in Albany—the prospect of a *new* New York, where all types of families have dignity, children are not criminalized, and older youth can directly participate in our experiment with democracy. If these priorities become policy, New York will be the safest, most prosperous, and holiest state in the Union.”

The Children's Defense Fund-New York (CDF-NY) has a unique approach to improving conditions for children, combining research, public education, policy development, direct services, and advocacy. A recognized authority in the endeavor to protect New York children and strengthen their families, CDF-NY serves as a resource and partner for children, families and organizations throughout New York State.