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Statewide coalition releases framework to scale up child care as NY re-opens and set a path to a stronger, more equitable future

Parent, early childhood, education, civil rights, business, and health organizations call on state to invest in strengthening child care system for infants and toddlers

NEW YORK – As New York moves forward with its strategy to re-open, the Raising NY coalition is calling on state leaders to develop and implement a comprehensive and inclusive plan to offer affordable, safe, high-quality child care during this period, rebuilding the child care system so that it is stronger and more equitable than before the pandemic.

Parents of infants and toddlers across New York State are experiencing intense financial insecurity during the coronavirus pandemic, with the crisis exacerbating pre-existing inequities among communities of color and families from low-income backgrounds. A recent Raising NY poll found the crisis has introduced significant uncertainty about child care for many parents of infants and toddlers in New York, with nearly half of families from low-income backgrounds worried they will be unable to afford their existing care if their financial situation worsens.

The federal emergency relief and stimulus bill known as the CARES Act provided New York State with significant funding to address critical child care needs. The [policy brief released today](#) illustrates how those funds, along with other subsidy funds not spent due to the steep drop in child care enrollment during New York’s “PAUSE,” can be most effectively applied, and could also provide a guide to longer-term reforms to support infants and toddlers.

“Families with infants and toddlers have suffered considerably during the coronavirus pandemic, with the crisis exacerbating pre-existing inequities for communities of color and communities that are low-income,” **said Hope Lesane, associate director for early childhood for The Education Trust–New York, which staffs the Raising NY coalition.** “That is why it is crucial state leaders include in New York’s re-opening strategy plans to support parents of infants and toddlers and child care providers as they re-open during this period, and also find opportunities to invest in the child care system and enhance quality so that it is stronger and more equitable than before the pandemic.”

“There is a unique opportunity to leverage federal CARES Act funding to support New York’s child care system which will be critical in re-opening business in the state,” **said Heather C. Briccetti, Esq., president and chief executive officer of The Business Council of New York State, Inc., and co-chair of Raising NY.** “As we work with our member businesses across the state on re-opening plans, it will be important for parents to know that their children have a safe place to be cared for when they return to work outside the home.”

“As New York re-opens, we agree with Governor Cuomo that now is the time to strengthen infrastructure and build back better,” **said Kate Breslin, president and chief executive officer of the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy and co-chair of Raising NY.** “Child care that is of high quality, affordable, and accessible in all regions of the state is crucial for a vibrant economy. Raising NY’s plan for reopening child care provides New York with a practical, informed roadmap for providing the equitable, affordable care New York families will need to get back on their feet as New York recovers from the pandemic, and for supporting our essential child care providers, all in a manner that will strengthen the foundations of New York’s child care system.”

“I am proud of the leadership, solidarity, and compassion I have witnessed and experienced during this unprecedented crisis,” **said Melodie Baker, director of education at United Way of Buffalo & Erie County, co-chair of Raising NY, and chair of the Erie-Niagara Birth to 8 Coalition.** “As we begin to rebuild, we must address the needs of our most vulnerable citizens’ young children and restore the backbone of our workforce: child care. The CARES Act funding and unspent subsidies present a rare opportunity to implement much-needed child care reform and coordinated support for New York families.”

The Raising NY coalition of parent, early childhood, education, civil rights, business, and health organizations dedicated to increasing the number of children who are on track for school readiness calls on state leaders to incorporate the following vital issues focused on the needs of families with infants and toddlers into New York’s re-opening plan.

1) Support employers by enabling New Yorkers with infants and toddlers to get back to work

- *Affordable quality child care across New York State:* As more businesses re-open and demand for child care increases, the state should use CARES Act funding, unused subsidy dollars, and other appropriate funding to make child care subsidy eligibility levels and co-pays more fair and equitable on a consistent statewide basis. In addition, regardless of the county where they live, parents who are unemployed and seeking work, retraining, or pursuing higher education during the crisis and after should be able to receive subsidy using federal CARES Act or other stimulus funds.
- *Regional coordination:* The state should direct all Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs) to create action plans in their regional plans, and to prioritize child care projects for state funding to support both the capital and operational needs of child care providers.

2) Increase child care capacity by supporting child care providers who experienced significant challenges up to and during the pandemic

- *Fiscal stability:* As child care programs come back online and can be expected to phase-in their enrollment, comply with any social distancing requirements and increased cleaning standards, they will likely be under-enrolled for a significant amount of time, but still need to maintain the staffing they had before. Providers

should receive an operating subsidy to help pay staff and cover their expenses. At the same time, child care subsidies across all counties should be paid based on enrollment — not attendance — both during this crisis and after, which will help account for fluctuations due to rapidly changing family needs, social distancing, and health concerns. For those child care providers who serve both families receiving subsidy and private pay, as well as providers who do not accept subsidy, the state should also explore ways to support programs in responding to lower capacity without shifting the burden to parents who are lower-income and middle-income and facing financial insecurity.

- *Reopening:* The state should invest CARES Act and other funds to provide direct financial support through re-opening grants that can be used for basic operating expenses, equipment and materials to enhance child development and enhance program quality, funding for staff training, adequate supplies to keep children healthy and safe, and to provide financial relief to families.
- *Data:* The state should use CARES Act funding to quickly establish a simple, easily accessible system to collect all enrollment, capacity, and vacancy data from providers, and require all child care providers to upload their data regularly.

3) Support the child care workforce that has helped keep New York going throughout this crisis

- *Premium pay:* New York should make strategic use of CARES Act or other dedicated federal funding to recognize, support, and preserve the child care workforce. CARES Act funds should also be used to prioritize child care subsidies for child care workers who need them.
- *Safe educational settings:* For the health of children, families, providers, and communities, it is essential that contraction of coronavirus among providers and children in care be tracked by appropriate state officials.
- *Career development and advancement:* The state should increase investment in career development opportunities that help the workforce afford and enroll in flexible postsecondary education that leads to credentials, certificates, degrees, and certification, and to provide educators with enhanced pay as they do so.

“We join Raising NY in calling on state leaders to ensure that plans to reopen the economy include safe, affordable, high-quality child care options where young children can learn and develop while their families return to work,” **said Kim Sweet, executive director of Advocates for Children of New York.**

“Child care is essential to reopening the economy,” **said Jennifer Marino Rojas, executive director of the Child Care Council of Suffolk, Inc.** “It is imperative that the system be adequately supported to ensure children and staff are safe and that child care businesses can survive.”

“As the pandemic hit, Governor Cuomo rightly designated child care an ‘essential’ business,” **said Larry Marx, chief executive officer of The Children’s Agenda.** “That fact becomes exponentially more true as we re-open our economy. As Raising NY’s recommendations show, we can’t return to work without safe, affordable, and quality child care any more than we could without safe, affordable, and quality food, transportation, or phones. New York is the ‘Excelsior’ state, and with smart state action, we can improve rather than just return to our pre-pandemic system of child care.”

“It is essential that New York State structures a re-opening plan that includes the voices and reflects the roles of *all sectors that are essential* to supporting a timely, safe, and effective reopening of the economy,” **said Ramon Peguero, Esq., president and chief executive officer of the Committee for**

Hispanic Children & Families. “It is imperative that New York consider the child care needs of its workforce and intentionally act to sustain and support the child care sector through this crisis, recovery, and beyond. The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF) joins its Raising NY partners in calling on the state to reflect the needs of the child care sector in its plans to re-open the state, using the CARES Act funding and state subsidy funds not used due to COVID-related drops in enrollment to not only address the immediate emergency needs of the sector, but to address the recovery needs and establish long-term reforms for a system so vital to our collective economic well-being.”

“Families will be the backbone of New York's recovery, and families with young children need priority in support for high-quality child care to enable them to safely return to work,” **said Dr. Liz Izakson, executive director of Docs for Tots.** “Child care providers need critical supports in terms of supplies, training, and assistance to provide that quality. Meeting these needs is a small down payment towards a thriving recovery.”

“As we re-open businesses, supporting and investing in child care is critically important,” **said Meredith Menzies Chimento, executive director of the Early Care & Learning Council.** “Child care is an essential industry and now is the time to ensure the system’s stability. Families cannot afford child care and child care providers must be adequately compensated for educating and nurturing children. Forward-thinking concepts, such as a Re-Opening NY Child Care Investment Fund, must be implemented.”

“It is absolutely critical that we stabilize our child care system and support struggling parents,” **said Rachel P. Bonsignore, director of Liftoff Western New York.** “Child care affordability and accessibility must be given priority as we look to rebuild as a state and a region. Without adequate investment, we’ll see more child care closures, potentially permanent ones. These impacts would be devastating and threaten the well-being of our children and families and our economic recovery.”

“Child care is one of those concrete supports that we call protective factors,” **said Tim Hathaway, executive director of Prevent Child Abuse NY.** “Accessible, affordable, reliable care decreases families’ stress because it allows parents to work knowing that their children are safe and sound. Child care providers have been on the frontline since the beginning of the pandemic, providing care for the children of essential workers while putting their own health at stake. As New York makes plans to re-open, this workforce must have the resources and funding necessary to ensure that they, and the children they care for, remain safe. No re-opening plan will be complete without an emphasis on child care and a re-imagining of how the system delivers these essential services to working families across the State.”

“At United Way of New York City, we know that more than ever, it is time to activate to ensure families with young children have access to the quality child care they deserve,” **said Sheena Wright, president & chief executive officer of the United Way of New York City.** “The data indicate that as we begin planning for reopening, this is critical for employers and families alike, and we are proud to stand with our partners to ask our leaders to ensure New Yorkers have access to affordable quality child care, and to support the child care workforce that is critical for us to move forward.”

Learn more about this issue and read the results of a recent poll of what parents of infants and toddlers are experiencing during the coronavirus crisis at RaisingNY.org/coronavirus.

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[About Raising NY](#)

Raising NY is a diverse statewide coalition of parent, early childhood, education, civil rights, business, and health organizations dedicated to increasing the number of children who are on track for school readiness. Learn more at RaisingNY.org.