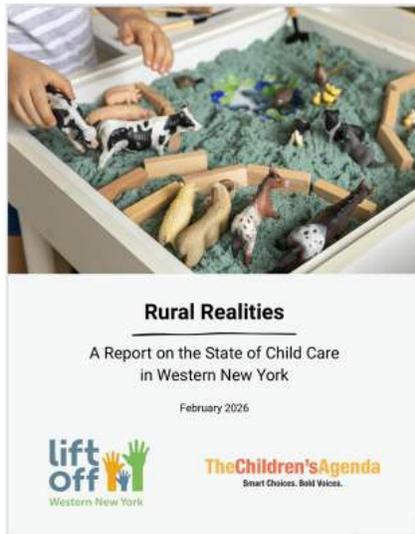




Liftoff WNY | E-News | February 2026

Report Release: "Rural Realities: The State of Child Care in Western New York"



A new report released this month by Liftoff WNY in partnership with [The Children's Agenda](#) takes a comprehensive look at the strengths and challenges facing families and child care providers in seven rural counties across Western New York.

Key findings from the report shows that all seven counties qualify as child care deserts, where the demand for child care far exceeds available licensed slots for young children. Structural issues in NYS's Child Care Assistance Program funding formula further disadvantage rural communities, resulting in substantially less funding per eligible child compared to wealthier regions of the state. At the same time, chronically low wages for child care educators, among the lowest-paying jobs in the region, continue to limit the availability of stable, high-quality care.

As the report states, "Accessible, affordable child care is the backbone of a healthy economy. Trusted child care settings allow parents and caregivers to work or pursue an education needed for economic mobility and allow businesses to recruit and maintain a reliable workforce. And while the economic impacts of child care access are important, the developmental support that quality early education provides for young children may be even more critical for the state's future."

This Friday, Lifftoff WNY & The Children's Agenda will be on WXXI News, Connections with Evan Dawson to discuss the report on air. Be sure to tune in [here](#), Friday, February 27 at 12:00pm.

[Read the Full Report](#)

Aligned Action Report

February 2026

KIDS CAN'T WAIT

Albany, NY

Lifftoff WNY



Lifftoff has had a great advocacy season so far!

Kids Can't Wait Advocacy Day:

Earlier this month Lifftoff headed to Albany for our fourth Kids Can't Wait Advocacy Day. This year we traveled with 44 advocates (which is double our number last year), to speak with policymakers on Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education. Our group reflected the breadth and strength of our region: parents of children with special needs; providers, therapists, and Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education directors from Niagara and Wyoming Counties, Help Me Grow WNY colleagues, five pediatric residents from Oishei Children's Hospital, three clinical psychology fellows (including two faculty members) from the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Department at Jacobs, two middle school students, and three members of the Buffalo and Erie County Lead Safe Task Force.

We met with 15 of the 17 WNY Senate and Assemblymember Offices and secured meaningful, bipartisan commitments. Senator Gallivan and Senator Borrello submitted letters in support of increasing resources for Early Intervention.

Senator Baskin committed to cosponsoring the two bills being advocated for this legislative session and offered to support Liftoff in local advocacy efforts. Several Assemblymembers verbally committed to champion various campaign priorities. Young kids with delays and disabilities deserve timely, high-quality services and supports- and WNY showed up to ask our policy makers to fight for them.

Empire State Child Care Advocacy Day:

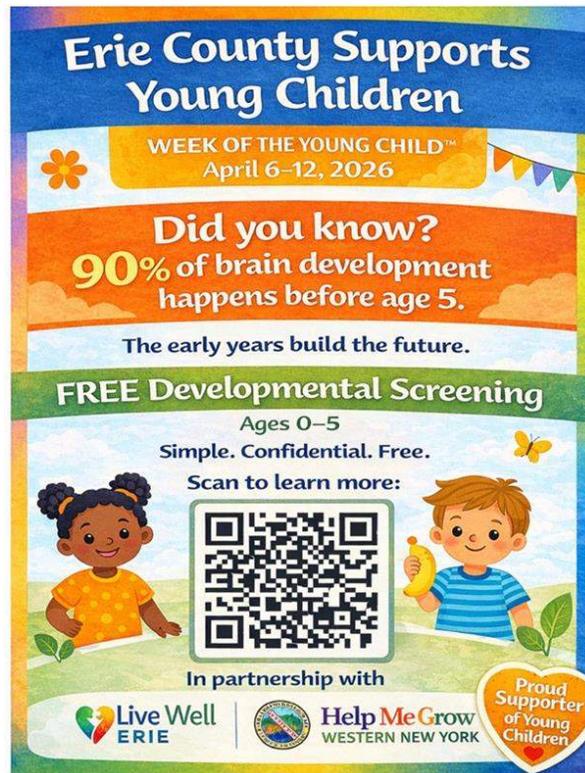
On January 27, Liftoff's Megan Battista joined more than 400 advocates in Albany for the Empire State Campaign for Child Care Advocacy Day, urging policymakers to invest in child care and advance universal child care across New York State.

Megan led a Western New York team that included a child care owner, a student fellow with the WNY Women's Foundation, and a partner from the Child Care Resource Network in meetings with Senator Gallivan and Assemblyman Sempolinski. The team shared how limited access to affordable, high-quality child care is straining families, especially in rural counties, and how child care professionals continue to be paid far below their contribution to our communities.

Child care is essential infrastructure for children, families, and our workforce. We're grateful to our statewide partners from the ESCCC and look forward to continuing the momentum this legislative session.



**Save the Date: Week of the Young Child April
2026**



Calling all of our friends and partners in Erie County: The Week of the Young Child is coming to WNY!

The Week of the Young Child (WOYC) is an annual celebration sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) to spotlight early learning, young children, their teachers, families, and communities. **This year, WOYC is scheduled for April 11-17, 2026.** Each day of the week features a unique theme designed to promote different aspects of early childhood education.

In Erie County, we use WOYC to highlight one of the simplest and most powerful ways to support young children and families: developmental screening. Screening helps families understand how their child is developing and creates an opportunity to connect to support early, when it can make the greatest difference.

The LiveWell Erie Early Childhood work group is looking for organizational partners and businesses to help amplify WOYC in our community, helping parents link to developmental screening resources and celebrate our youngest community members. We are challenging the Liffort community to BE one or FIND one.

Learn more in the LWE [Business/Organizational Toolkit](#)

Ready to promote The Week of the Young Child? Register Here: [LiveWell Erie Community Engagement Event RSVP Form](#)



Instagram: @Liftoff_WNY



X (formerly Twitter): @LiftoffWNY



LinkedIn: @Liftoff WNY



Facebook: @Liftoff WNY

Connect with Liftoff on socials or
visit us at liftoffwny.org



{{Disclaimer}}

C/O NY Funders Alliance 431 E Fayette St. Syracuse, NY, 13202

(Unsubscribing is not supported in previews)

