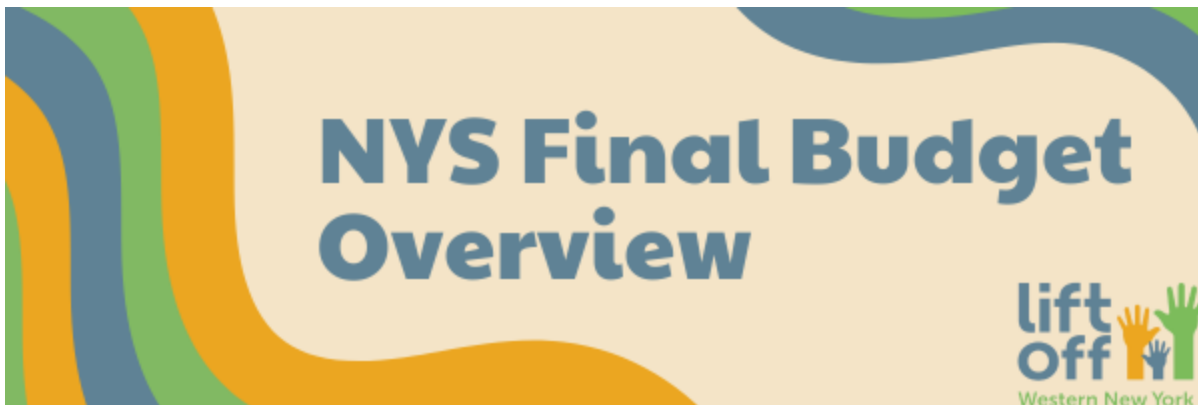




Western New York

Liftoff WNY | E-News | June 2026



New York's Final State Budget: What It Means for Young Children

New York's final state budget includes some of the **most significant investments in early childhood in recent memory** and advocates across Western New York and the state made it happen. Here's what's in it, and where the work continues:

- **Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)**: Over a \$3 billion investment to help families access subsidized care.
- **Universal PreK & 3-K**: Over \$560 million increase to expand access statewide.
- **First Three NY pilots**: \$60 million to Broome, Dutchess, and Monroe counties to offer high-quality, affordable care for children ages 0–3 regardless of family income.
- **2Care**: \$73 million for child care for two-year-olds in New York City, fully funded by the Governor for the first two years.
- **NYS Office of Child Care and Early Education**: \$1.5 million to establish a new state office to drive implementation of high-quality, universal child care for NY families.

An effective, inclusive, and equitable early childhood system depends on every part working well and this budget left some essential pieces behind. Early Intervention, Help Me Grow New York State, Preschool Special Education, and child care workforce wages and compensation all received no new investments. These programs and key supports are foundational not on the margins. The work to bring Albany along is far from over.

In the months ahead, Liftoff will share more about local implementation and how you can stay engaged. There is still a lot of work to do, and this community has shown it's up to the task.

Questions or reflections on what this budget means for your work? Reach out to the Liftoff team and be sure to follow us on LinkedIn.

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Out & About with Liftoff WNY



It's officially Summer in Western New York. We had a busy Spring season, and it doesn't look like we are slowing down!

Liftoff was proud to be on the planning committee of the 5th Annual Community Health & Advocacy Conference hosted by the [Jacobs School of Medicine & Biomedical Sciences](#). Community leaders from across sectors met on Friday, May 8th to discuss topics related to refugee and immigrant health. Liftoff Learning and Advocacy Coordinator Megan Battista was invited to present on the success of this year's Kids Can't Wait Advocacy Day. She highlighted how Liftoff engaged members of the medical community in partnership with a middle school Youth Ambassador who participated in the Advocacy Day event in February.

At the end of May, Megan and Liftoff Director Rachel Bonsignore, traveled to Alexandria, Virginia for the [Early Childhood Funders Collaborative](#) Conference. The conference provided a valuable opportunity to connect with early childhood collaborative groups from across the country and learn from their initiatives and investments. Through Liftoff's membership in the Collaborative, the team was introduced to the NJ Early Years Funders Collaborative and was later invited to present to its members. During the presentation, Liftoff shared its work in Early Intervention and highlighted the successes of the Onboard Network. We are grateful to the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative for creating opportunities to build meaningful connections and bring our work to new audiences and partners.

Liftoff was invited to share about the impact of lead on our community and opportunities for advocacy related to lead and young children with preschool special education and general education teachers, teacher assistants, and community-based organizations serving preschool students at Buffalo Public Schools PreKindergarten Superintendent Days. Over the course of two days, Megan Battista, [Help Me Grow WNY](#), [Parent Network](#), and [Lead 716](#) engaged with over 150 preschool professionals, many of

whom expressed that it was their first ever professional development related to lead and the enduring impacts of lead exposure on children.

We kicked off June at the Buffalo History Museum as Rachel served as the moderator for a documentary screening and panel discussion of ["Make A Circle"](#) in collaboration with the [New York Association for the Education of Young Children and several early childhood partners and organizations](#). The film follows a group of child care educators who are determined to change how society values the education of its youngest citizens, weaving together the magic they create in the classroom, the struggles they endure at home, and their tireless activism for their profession. The screening brought in around 73 attendees and was very well received!

As we head to the end of June, we were thrilled to be featured in the [Health Foundation of Western and Central New York's 2025 Annual Report](#). The feature spotlighted our work in Early Intervention, Universal Screenings and celebrated the advocacy successes of Onboard. The spotlight also highlighted the work of our Help Me Grow partners doing great work in Oswego and Onondaga counties.

Onboard Member Spotlight



The graphic features the 'lift off Onboard Western New York' logo at the top left. To the right is a circular photo of Amy Fialkowski, a woman with glasses and a purple shirt, smiling. Below the photo is a yellow speech bubble containing her name and title. At the bottom right are three stylized hands in orange, blue, and green.

lift off Onboard
Western New York

Member Spotlight

AMY FIALKOWSKI
Early Intervention Coordinator of Wyoming County

Amy Fialkowski believes every child deserves the chance to thrive and that rural communities deserve to be heard. As Wyoming County's only EI service coordinator, she joined Onboard to fight for the families and kids too often overlooked by a system designed for big cities.

Liftoff's Onboard Network is made up of advocates from throughout the Western New York, who represent a variety of specialties and sectors. It's important for Onboard to represent the geographic diversity of our region as early childhood priorities may shift based on where you live. This month, we're highlighting a great advocate from one of WNY's rural communities, Amy Fialkowski. Amy serves as the [Early Intervention Coordinator of Wyoming County](#). Amy is the sole service coordinator for the county, carrying a caseload of 65 to 75 children at a time.

As the only service coordinator in Wyoming County, Amy is very familiar with the obstacles of the Early Intervention (EI) system, specifically in rural communities.

Two of the biggest challenges that face her county are a lack of providers in the region as well as transportation. Wyoming County is a large geographic area, and many services are based in the centrally located Town of Warsaw. Families living on the outskirts of the county have a difficult time getting providers to travel there. Transportation is another challenge for folks as not everyone has access to cars to get to appointments, especially those in the local migrant community.

Not only does Amy have professional experience with EI success; she has personal experience as her children received EI and Preschool Special Education Services. “I truly believe that it works, and I think every child needs the chance to receive services and give them an extra benefit of starting kindergarten ready.” That lived experience shapes everything about how she shows up - for the families that she serves, for the providers she recruits and supports, and for the policymakers she tries to reach.

Through Help Me Grow WNY, Amy learned about Onboard and found in it something she hadn't expected: a program that was not only purposeful but, in her words, fun. When asked why she joined Onboard, “Because it's fun. Because your voice gets heard and you can make a difference in other people's lives — the little kids' lives.” She has attended three Kids Can't Wait Advocacy Days with Liftoff and appreciates the ability to share personal stories of EI success with policymakers.

If advocating for children across the region, creating new professional connections and having fun while doing it sounds like something that may be of interest to you, be sure to join us as an Onboard Ambassador! Learn more [here](#) and if you have any questions, please reach out to Advocacy and Learning Coordinator, Megan Battista at Megan@liftoffwny.org.

Save the Date: Building Strong Foundations for Children, Families, and Communities Conference



Liftoff is a proud member of the Allegany Early Childhood Development Coalition and is a sponsor of this summer's Allegany County Early Childhood Conference. "Building Strong Foundations for Children, Families and Communities" will be filled with

keynotes, workshops, networking opportunities and more. The conference will be on August 14, 2026 at Alfred University, Alfred, NY. Stay tuned for more information and in the meantime be sure to check out our partners at [Ardent Solutions](#).



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