

2024 Vote for Kids Survey



The Westchester Children's Association surveyed candidates for elected office throughout Westchester. The responses for all candidates that responded are below. We very much appreciate the candidates that took the time to answer our most pressing questions on children's welfare in the county. Unfortunately, we did not receive as many responses as we expected and hoped.

US Senate Candidate

Kirsten Gillibrand

Child Poverty:

What specific actions will you take to reduce child poverty, and how will you measure the success of these efforts?

Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S Senate NY Candidate
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Social Media:
[@SenGillibrand](#)//[KirstenGillibrand](#)

The American Rescue Plan that I fought to pass expanded the Child Tax Credit to a maximum of \$3,600 per child and made that credit fully refundable. That policy change put money in the pockets of working New York families during the pandemic, and the effects were immediate. Per Columbia's Center on Poverty & Social Policy, the expansion of the Child Tax Credit cut the child poverty rate in half by giving families flexible funding to meet their needs—from child care to health care to putting food on the table. Despite my efforts, Congress let that expansion expire in 2022, and we saw the poverty rate rise afterward. I will continue to fight to expand the Child Tax Credit and ensure that raising a child in New York is not a luxury but an affordable reality.

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Child & Youth Homelessness:

What strategies will you pursue to ensure stable housing and prevent homelessness among children and youth?

<p>Kirsten Gillibrand U.S Senate NY keg@kirstengillibrand.com 301-801-4483</p> <p>Social Media: @SenGillibrand//KirstenGillibrand</p>	<p>It's truly heartbreaking that in one of the wealthiest nations in the world, we have over 30,000 unaccompanied youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness. We all know that safe and stable housing is crucial for the health, development, and future potential of our children.</p> <p>To address this issue, we must ensure families have a place to call home. We can do this by increasing funding for housing choice vouchers and speeding up the availability of affordable housing. I have historically advocated for these housing programs and will continue to seek ways to encourage the private sector to both develop new housing and preserve what we already have.</p> <p>Additionally, I've consistently joined my colleagues in the Senate in pushing for adequate funding for the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program which is the only federal program dedicated to reducing youth homelessness.</p>
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Youth Well-Being / Mental Health:

What steps will you take to ensure transparency in funding for school mental health services, and how will you support community organizations focused on mental health to provide complementary out of school resources?

Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S Senate NY
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I am committed to ensuring that our children have access to comprehensive mental health care and services both in and out of school. I will ensure that community organizations are receiving the highest amount of funding and assistance from the federal government to ensure these crucial programs continue to provide the highest standard of care.

I am proud to have helped pass the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act in June 2021, which included funding and resources to help expand and strengthen the school-based mental health workforce. New York State has seen historic federal investment through this law and has already received \$3.9 million in School-Based Mental Health Services Grants. These will be used to help increase the number of psychologists, counselors, and other mental health service providers employed in schools. As a result of funding from this landmark law, approximately 395 new mental health professionals will be hired in schools across New York State.

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US Congressional Candidates

Congressional **District 16** George Latimer and Miriam Levitt Flisser are the only candidates that responded to our survey.

Child Poverty:

What specific actions will you take to reduce child poverty, and how will you measure the success of these efforts?

<p>George Latimer U.S House of Representative Candidate District 16 info@LatimerforNY.com 914-740-3141</p>	<p>If elected to Congress, I will pursue policies that address the affordability of housing and other necessities and seek full funding for programs targeted at protecting children in need. As a public official, I have supported/authorized programs to address youth poverty including oversight of the county’s Invest in Kids program, hiring a youth workforce specialist for job training, accelerating DSS caseworker staffing post-pandemic, helping working parents by increasing county funding for childcare from \$30M to \$56M, and helping working moms by providing \$5.8M to launch a free women’s entrepreneurship program. These actions cumulatively help alleviate pressure on vulnerable families, and encourage professional, financial and emotional independence. In Congress, I will continue to pursue these types of policies to disrupt the cycle of poverty.</p>
<p>Miriam Levitt Flisser U.S House of Representative Candidate District 16 Drmiriamforcongress@gmail.com 914- 414-2794</p>	<p>I am a Pediatrician. I was a founder of the WIC program in its original inception. Specifically, I have just certified with NY Presbyterian Hospital in its program to enter child patients (and pregnant mothers) to receive needed food supplies from established food providers. The patients will be monitored during their ongoing pediatric care and statistical information will be produced. The program is under expansion in Westchester, notably in the City of Mount Vernon, which is geographically close to the NYP Westchester Hospital facility.</p>

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Child & Youth Homelessness:

What strategies will you pursue to ensure stable housing and prevent homelessness among children and youth?

George Latimer	If elected, I will approach homelessness and affordable housing creation with the same innovation I demonstrated as a state and county official. As County Executive, I have enabled the creation of 6,000+ units of affordable housing, and I recently authorized \$100M to incentivize additional units. I have made \$7M in funds available to the public housing authorities to ensure that existing housing is habitable, and set up our first Office of Housing Counsel, which provides legal assistance to residents facing evictions, unfair lease renewals, and costly repairs. Additionally, under my leadership, the county moved a record number of children out of Foster Care and into Kinship Care with family. Further, if elected, I will support comprehensive immigration reform policies, including pathways to legal residency and work permits to address the recent influx of homeless immigrant families.
Miriam Levitt Flisser	I will encourage family stability through family well-being, including job opportunities, return of high value- added manufacturing jobs and industries to the USA, and childcare services, to encourage economic improvement, for our populations at risk.

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Youth Well-Being / Mental Health:

What steps will you take to ensure transparency in funding for school mental health services, and how will you support community organizations focused on mental health to provide complementary out of school resources?

George Latimer	<p>To ensure children are given the opportunity to live up to their full potential, I have continued to expand funding for youth mental health services and organizations year over year. Under my leadership, mental health funding was increased in Westchester 56%. That's millions more for suicide prevention, addiction services, child and adolescent mental health services, and mental health clinics. I also invested in the county's parks and recreational facilities, which gives children access to healthy recreational opportunities. If elected, I will support initiatives for affordable and accessible child care, easing the burden on families. I will also prioritize increasing federal school aid to ensure every child has access to quality education. Additionally, I will promote programs that guarantee access to nutritious meals for children—fostering healthy development, which undoubtedly contributes to children's mental health. I will strengthen and advocate for laws and resources that protect children from online exploitation and abuse. I believe NY-16 deserves a future where every child has the opportunity to thrive and have the access to the mental health resources that they deserve.</p>
Miriam Levitt Flisser	<p>School choice, and the expanded development of charter schools, will increase mental health services and other services for children with special needs. Mental health programs should be encouraged to receive private and government support for these essential services. I am the Medical Director of our Bronxville School District, which provides schooling, through the Westchester BOCES program, for year-round support for students from all locations in the County. During COVID 19, we were able to provide these students with uninterrupted services, and We Never Closed, keeping our schools open for students during the Summer, and throughout the Pandemic.</p>

2024 Vote for Kids Survey



NYS Assembly we received responses from the following candidates:

Alessandro Crocco District 92

Chris Burdick District 93

Dana Levenberg District 95

Child Poverty:

What specific actions will you take to reduce child poverty, and how will you measure the success of these efforts?

<p>Alessandro Crocco NY State Assembly Candidate District 92 info@crocco4ny.com 914-441-1863</p>	<p>I will work hard to reduce child poverty by focusing on three main areas: 1. Support for Families: I will push for programs that help parents find good-paying jobs and access affordable childcare, so they can better provide for their families. This will help create stable homes where children can thrive. 2. Access to Education: I will support schools and programs that give all children, no matter their background, the tools they need to succeed. Education is key to breaking the cycle of poverty, so we need to make sure every child gets the best chance to learn and grow. 3. Health and Nutrition: I will work to expand access to healthcare and food programs so that no child goes without the basics like healthy food and medical care. When children are healthy, they can focus better on school and their future.</p>
<p>Chris Burdick NY State Assembly Candidate District 93 Chriswburdick@gmail.com 914-924-5210</p>	<p>I will continue to work alongside such nonprofits as Community Center of Northern Westchester, Lifting Up Westchester, Mount Kisco Interfaith Food Pantry, El Centro Hispano, Make the Road, and Neighbors Link, to name a few. These organizations not only help with food and shelter, but they help families get back on their feet. I have been able to provide funding for many of these organizations and will continue to work collaboratively with them to help as many people as possible.</p>

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<p>Dana Levenberg NY State Assembly Candidate District 95 dana4assembly@gmail.com 914-826-0062</p>	<p>During my tenure in the New York State Assembly, I have been proud to be a part of the Assembly Majority which delivered major investments in families and children. Specifically, we expanded the child tax credit, TAP eligibility, and the availability of free school meals. These investments will go a long way to reduce child poverty, but there is much more to do. For example, we have not yet been successful at delivering universal school meals. I will continue to fight for these common sense policies and ensure their success by following up with state agencies and local organizations for feedback.</p>
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Child & Youth Homelessness:

What strategies will you pursue to ensure stable housing and prevent homelessness among children and youth?

<p>Alessandro Crocco NY Assembly Candidate District 92 info@crocco4ny.com 914-441-1863</p>	<p>Affordable Housing Expansion: I will support policies that increase the availability of affordable housing, ensuring families have access to stable, long-term homes. This includes encouraging new housing developments and improving existing housing conditions.</p> <p>Support for Families in Crisis: I will advocate for programs that provide emergency assistance to families facing eviction or financial hardship, helping them stay in their homes during tough times.</p> <p>Strengthen Social Services: I will work to enhance coordination between schools, shelters, and local agencies to identify at-risk families early, ensuring they receive the support they need before they become homeless.</p> <p>Youth-Specific Support: I will champion services specifically for homeless youth, including transitional housing and counseling, to help them find stability and build a path to independence.</p>
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2024 Vote for Kids Survey



<p>Chris Burdick NY State Assembly Candidate District 93 Chriswburdick@gmail.com 914-924-5210</p>	<p>I have been working on legislation to address the housing crisis, with a focus on affordable housing. I hosted a housing summit along with Assemblymember Levenberg to hear from municipalities, developers, and community organizations to help develop ideas on how to go about this. I also have been working with some of the municipalities in my district on specific affordable housing projects. In addition to this, many of the nonprofits listed in the answer above work on this specific issue.</p>
<p>Dana Levenberg NY State Assembly Candidate District 95 dana4assembly@gmail.com 914-826-0062</p>	<p>In order to address our statewide housing shortage, we must start building more housing at varying levels of affordability and also improve protections for renters. To that end, I have been working on legislation to require municipalities across the state to consider their housing needs and develop a housing action plan. This legislation developed out of a Housing Summit I held where we heard from municipalities and not-for-profits specific actions that are needed to address our housing crisis. I also advocated for Good Cause Eviction as well as the Housing Access Voucher Program, which would help families stay in their homes and communities. I plan to continue my advocacy on housing, specifically with Town Hall meetings and other educational opportunities to bring widespread understanding of the importance of building housing in Westchester County.</p>

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Youth Well-Being / Mental Health:

What steps will you take to ensure transparency in funding for school mental health services, and how will you support community organizations focused on mental health to provide complementary out of school resources?

<p>Chris Burdick NY State Assembly Candidate District 93 Chriswburdick@gmail.com 914-924-5210</p>	<p>I feel that our society is more and more committed to allocating funds and resources to mental health for our youth. I am completely in support of this effort and will continue to support budget items and legislation in support of this. I feel very fortunate to have strong relationships with the community organizations in my district and will continue to cultivate those relationships.</p>
<p>Dana Levenberg NY State Assembly Candidate District 95 dana4assembly@gmail.com 914-826-0062</p>	<p>Investing in mental health services, especially those in our schools and for young people, has been a top priority for me as a legislator. Since taking office, Legislature has delivered \$19 million to support mental health services for school-aged children, and I know we can do so much more. I will continue to advocate for additional funding in this sector, in particular for providers that work within our school system to ensure these positions remain competitive in the industry. I will also support organizations with individual grants. For example, I allocated \$22,000 to the Harris Project to provide education on co-occurring disorders to students in the Ossining and Peekskill School Districts. Organizations like the Harris Project are doing incredible work in our community, and I am committed to supporting their efforts financially and with policy decisions.</p>

2024 Vote for Kids Survey



NYS Senate we received responses from the following candidates:

Andrea Stewart Cousins & Khris Kerr District 35

Shelley Mayer District 37

Child Poverty:

What specific actions will you take to reduce child poverty, and how will you measure the success of these efforts?

<p>Andrea Stewart Cousins NY State Senate Candidate District 35 ASCCampaign24@gmail.com</p> <p>Social Media: Facebook and Instagram: @AndreaStewartCousins Twitter: @AndreaSCousins</p>	<p>Under my leadership, I have been proud to expand access to the Empire State Child Tax credit, first to include children 0-4 to help lift parents and their children out of poverty during one of the most expensive times of childhood. Secondly, this past year, I was also proud that as a part of the budget, we provided a supplemental child tax credit, sent in the form of a check directly to 1.8 Million families across New York this summer. Since taking the Majority in the Senate, under my leadership, we have also expanded Universal Pre-k across the state so it now covers 90% of four year olds and provided free school meals to children across New York. All of these actions are helping to bring children out of poverty and better support them from the very beginning of their lives.</p>
<p>Khris Kerr NY State Senate Candidate District 35 khris@kerr4ny.com 9144100900</p>	<p>There needs to be more counselors in schools and Child Protective Services needs an overhaul. Public schools need to change their polices and work with government to obtain more funding to help kids in need. I was a former public school teacher in low income areas and many of my students had issues that were ignored by the administration and didn't want to take my reports and retaliated against me when I informed them of kids who needed help.</p>

2024 Vote for Kids Survey



Shelley Mayer
NY State Senate Candidate
District 37
shelleymayer4senate@gmail.com
718-308-1437

We have shamefully high levels of child poverty in this state and in Westchester. My colleagues and I have worked to expand opportunities for New Yorkers and reduce poverty. In the most recently adopted budget, the Senate fought to include \$350 million for a new supplemental tax credit for families eligible for the Empire State Child Tax Credit. We expanded access and eligibility for programs such as childcare assistance, universal school lunches and full-day pre-k. We need to continue to tackle food insecurity. Declines in rates of poverty are one measure of success, but many of these investments will take time to have an impact, even while they increase quality of life and intergenerational opportunity. We must do more to ensure families' wages and benefits are adequate to raise their families and afford housing, whether it is through the market or through public provision.

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Child & Youth Homelessness:

What strategies will you pursue to ensure stable housing and prevent homelessness among children and youth?

<p>Andrea Stewart Cousins NY State Senate Candidate District 35 ASCCampaign24@gmail.com</p> <p>Social Media: Facebook and Instagram: @AndreaStewartCousins Twitter: @AndreaSCousins</p>	<p>As Majority Leader I was proud this past budget cycle to work with my conference and the Assembly and Governor to pass a comprehensive housing package that worked to not only allow for the building of new more affordable homes, but also had strong measures to keep individuals in their homes. It included \$40 million for eviction prevention services outside of New York City and a new \$150 million Housing for the Future program to support new affordable homes and apartments across New York. This was the first step in working to make housing more affordable and stable in order to prevent homelessness for families, children and youth in New York State.</p>
<p>Khris Kerr NY State Senate Candidate District 35 khris@kerr4ny.com 9144100900</p>	<p>There shouldn't be any homeless kids or people. Unfortunately, many of our current elected officials only care about what their donors want and collecting a paycheck. Currently, billions of dollars are wastefully being spent by government. If wasteful spending is allocated to building more temporary/permanent housing for kids/people there will be no homeless kids. Additional services need to be provided such as extracurricular activities and apprentice programs so that kids have a pathway to do what career they want.</p>

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I suggest a multi-pronged strategy. For most children, ensuring their parents have affordable, safe housing is the most effective way to ensure children have stable housing. We need to expand the supply of affordable rental housing across the state, and we need to expand supports, such as the Housing Access Voucher Program (S568B). Recently, we adopted Good Cause Eviction protections that municipalities can opt into to help tenants stay in their homes and protect them from excessive rent increases. I was a strong proponent of this legislation. We also need to build more housing to expand the supply of safe, affordable units. There are also young people for whom stable housing and preventing homelessness requires support for them outside their families. It is essential that we fund these services and provide community support for those who need foster care or other living situations.

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Youth Well-Being / Mental Health:

What steps will you take to ensure transparency in funding for school mental health services, and how will you support community organizations focused on mental health to provide complementary out of school resources?

<p>Andrea Stewart Cousins NY State Senate Candidate District 35 ASCCampaign24@gmail.com</p> <p>Social Media: Facebook and Instagram: @AndreaStewartCousins Twitter: @AndreaSCousins</p>	<p>Under my leadership as Majority Leader, the Senate Democratic Conference has become known as the education conference. After almost three decades, we finally fully funded our schools the millions of dollars they were owed. This funding helps support not just what's in the classroom, but also the wraparound supports like mental health services that are vital to a child's education. We have also increased wages for mental health professionals and provided record funding to mental health programs for schools over the last several years. I will continue to collaborate with school districts and education stakeholders on supporting school mental health services as the next session and budget process begins.</p>
<p>Khris Kerr NY State Senate Candidate District 35 khris@kerr4ny.com 914-410-0900</p>	<p>Budgets should be transparent to the public. It's taxpayer dollars that fund the government and the taxpayers should know exactly where their monies are being spent. I will demand that the budget reports be provided to the public. More counselors/mental health professionals are needed in the schools, and grants must be provided to local community organizations for people to seek mental health. More mental health facilities and staff are needed. But, there is a lack of staff. There needs to be more and better pathways to encourage more people to pursue careers in mental health including incentives such as student loan forgiveness, affordable/free housing, and apprenticeships leading to employment opportunities. There needs to be safe places for kids to go to get help and not have to be on the streets having no place to turn. Kids are vulnerable and need the most help of all. No kid should be left behind and deserve better than what is available now.</p>

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Our schools have rightly been charged with providing more services for our children. Our children spend much of their time there, and they can meet kids where they are. I have championed funding for school mental health services. But children need more, and our community-based services need to be supported. I support Community Schools in all locations, which includes wrap-around services through our schools in conjunction with local not-for-profits and government agencies. Out of school, we can best address youth mental health by starting with stable homes. As noted, I continue to fight for affordable housing in our communities. I support services for children whose families are impacted by the criminal justice system. We need to affirmatively address how the system impacts children's mental health, and it is our duty to provide support to them, working to mitigate any harm from their experience with the criminal justice system. I am proud of the NYS Legislature's efforts to address the challenges of social media and mobile phones on youth mental health. In short, we need a comprehensive, robust response to address and respond to children's mental health.