



Westchester Children's Association's Statement on the One House Budgets

Westchester Children's Association thanks the New York Senate and Assembly for prioritizing key initiatives in their 2025 one-house budget proposals. These proposals represent a critical step forward in addressing the challenges families face, providing essential resources that not only address immediate needs but also lay the foundation for a more secure and stable future for underserved communities throughout New York.

Child Poverty

The Senate and Assembly one-house budget proposals for New York State introduce key measures focused on combating child poverty and enhancing family well-being. A standout effort is **the inclusion of the Working Families Tax Credit**, a refundable credit designed to offer immediate financial relief to families. This initiative aligns with the Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council's (CPRAC) recommendations and builds upon Governor Hochul's expansion of the Child Tax Credit. By providing essential financial support, the credit aims to help lift families out of economic hardship, providing crucial support during times of rising costs and uncertainty.

Additionally, both the **Senate and Assembly** provide **\$250 million** for the **Housing Access Voucher Program**. This funding helps low-income individuals and families access affordable housing by offering rental assistance, aiming to reduce homelessness and housing instability, particularly in areas with rising rents.

Another key initiative is the inclusion of cash assistance programs in both the Senate and Assembly budget proposals, addressing the financial challenges parents face. The Senate proposal introduces **Baby Bucks Allowance**, providing cash assistance to **15,000 public assistance recipients** from the last three months of pregnancy until the child turns **18 months**. The Assembly's **INSPIRE pilot program** offers a **\$400 monthly allowance** to mothers and infants eligible for public assistance from the last three months of pregnancy through the child's first year. These programs are vital as they offer essential financial relief during a child's critical developmental years, reducing stress and helping ensure that families have the support needed to foster healthier, more stable environments for their children.

The proposals also prioritize improving access to essential resources like food, with the **Senate and Assembly including full funding for statewide universal school meals** in their one-house budgets. By ensuring that all children have access to meals at school, the state helps eliminate a significant barrier to learning, allowing students to focus on their education without the distraction of hunger.

Youth Well-being:

Mental health services for children are another area of focus, with both the Senate and Assembly allocating funds for children's outpatient mental health and substance use disorder services. With investments of **\$200 million** from the Senate and **\$16.5 million** from the Assembly, these funds will help address the growing need for accessible mental health care, reducing waitlists and increasing capacity to ensure children receive the timely care they need.

Child welfare is also a major focus, particularly through the Assembly's proposal for **\$80 million** for the **Communities Helping Improve Lives Daily (CHILD)** program. This program, which mirrors the proposed Child and Family Wellbeing Fund, seeks to support community-driven initiatives that strengthen families, reduce the risk of harm related to Child Protective Services (CPS) involvement, and invest in resources that promote family preservation, reunification, and healing. By targeting historically underserved communities, the state can provide essential support to children and families, helping to disrupt cycles of hardship and enhance long-term outcomes.

Childhood Support

Both budget proposals include critical funding for the childcare workforce. The **Senate proposal includes \$500 million in workforce retention grants**, ensuring that early childhood educators remain supported and adequately compensated. This investment is essential for maintaining a stable and effective workforce, ensuring that children receive the best possible care and education. The Assembly proposal allocates an additional **\$200 million for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)**, which will help families avoid disruptions in childcare services.

In addition, the Senate emphasizes the importance of afterschool programming, with the Senate proposing **\$70.3 million** in additional funding for **the Learning and Enrichment Afterschool Program Supports (LEAP)**, bringing the total to \$180 million. These investments will ensure that more children have access to enriching, supportive afterschool environments that foster academic, social, and emotional growth.



While we celebrate the progress reflected in the Senate and Assembly proposals, we remain mindful of the uncertain times we face. With ongoing threats of federal funding cuts and growing challenges for families, it is clear that there is still much work to be done. However, these proposed investments in child poverty reduction, youth well-being, and childhood support represent a meaningful commitment to ensuring a brighter, more stable future for New York's children and families. As we continue to fight for the most vulnerable, we also look forward to further efforts aimed at supporting **youth justice programs** and policies that will create safer, more equitable futures for all children in our state.