

## CELEBRATING A LEGACY OF IMPACT

### WCA Executive Director Allison Lake Celebrated for 25+ Years of Service

On June 4, 2024, over 150 people gathered at Harrison Meadows Country Club to celebrate Allison Lake, who served WCA for over 25 years. The impact of Allison's long tenure at WCA was felt the moment you walked into the ballroom and joined the excitement of the attendees. Present were leaders from every corner of the community, including nonprofit organizations, government employees, elected officials, and the private sector. The celebration was proudly sponsored by Leslie Allen, Elias Foundation, Harry Marketing, PCSB Foundation, and Westchester Medical Center.

The event kicked off with a resounding performance by the White Plains Youth Bureau Drum Corps, a youth band which began the event with the energy and spirit of WCA's mission: the children. WCA Board Member Kelli Galloway served as our emcee for the evening and took the opportunity to celebrate significant WCA policy wins this year in the New York State budget, including the expanded Empire State Child Tax Credit and Universal School Meals. The event's program highlighted the many aspects of Allison's tenure at WCA including her leadership, mentorship, her role as a trusted community partner, and above all,

her being a fierce and fearless advocate for children. Board Member Robin Williams shared the poem "Beatitudes of a Leader" by Ina Potter that emphasized the thoughtful attributes of Allison's style of leadership. "Blessed is she who wins her point tactfully and arouses no enmity," read a line from the poem in perfect alignment with Allison's advocacy ingenuity, "for she shall succeed."

Former WCA Executive Director Cora Greenberg highlighted Allison's many advocacy achievements at WCA including spearheading the Early Child Health Taskforce and leading the successful advocacy efforts that helped pass the Raise the Age. "In all these efforts, Allison's skill at engaging stakeholders and building coalitions — in other words 'herding cats' — was the key to success. Over and over, she was able to bridge divides and overcome conflicts with creativity, compassion and patience," Cora shared. The next speaker was a surprise to Allison, former WCA Program & Policy Associate Sarah Yergeau, who is now involved in advocacy work in Washington, DC. Sarah shared personal anecdotes of Allison's influence on her as a mentor and supervisor. "She's had a lasting impact well beyond Westchester by shaping the trajectory of the careers of dozens of staff who have gone on to varied (article continues on page 5)

*"Blessed is she who stands staunchly for what she believes. For she will have peace of mind."*

Ina Potter  
*Beatitudes of a Leader*

The evening was a celebration of the community that was brought together by WCA and Allison's leadership.

Right: Allison Lake at the Podium.

Middle photo, from left: Zeltzyn Sanchez Gomez, Jim Mann, Rowan Reyes, Allison Lake, Jackie Mann, Nada Khader, LaMont Badru, Lutonya Russell-Humes.

Bottom: The White Plains Youth Bureau Drum Corps



Ensuring every child is healthy, safe, and prepared for life's challenges regardless of race or zip code.

## A LETTER FROM OUR OUTGOING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

If we have timed this correctly, you are reading this during my final days as executive director of WCA. I suppose it's only natural that I have spent parts of this last month counting down: last state budget session, last audit, last June benefit, last board meeting, last grant report...

I came to WCA not exactly sure of advocacy and what my role would be. I am grateful for the learning and growth in my career. I am humbled by the courage and commitment demonstrated by so many in this field and thankful for the fellowship I share with many of you.

As our communities face numerous challenges and a political landscape that seems to change daily, WCA is well positioned to be the champion our children and youth need at this moment. The agency is strong, with a committed board, and a smart and dedicated staff holding steadfast to the mission.

I know you will graciously welcome Adam Rabinovitch as the new Executive Director of WCA and will support him as you supported me. Adam brings a wealth of experience from the private and nonprofit sectors. He also brings a deep sense of community and dedication to Westchester County that will serve him well in this role. He will build on my work and those before me — to move WCA forward. I hope you will stay connected and deepen your engagement with WCA under Adam's leadership.

Until next time, I am off to rest, which I am learning is also resistance, do a little gardening, hit the trails and find new ways to give our children the future they deserve. I extend my heartfelt thanks for everything!

Onward.



Allison Lake, Executive Director, Westchester Children's Association



## WCA new faces & updates



**Congratulations to Kerry King who will be the new WCA Board President & Ann Umemoto who will be stepping into the role of Board Chair.**

### Welcome to the WCA Board of Directors, Dr. Heather Brumberg and Robin White



**Heather L. Brumberg, MD, MPH, FAAP** is a Professor of Pediatrics and Clinical Public Health at Maria Fareri Children's Hospital and New York Medical College, where she also serves as Associate Director of the Regional Perinatal Center. A neonatologist and public health advocate, she focuses on environmental health and social determinants of health. A graduate of Harvard, Tufts, and Yale, she co-authored the AAP's policy on air pollution and children's health. WCA is thrilled to welcome her expertise to our Board.



**Robin White, MPA** is Director of External Affairs for AT&T in NYC and Westchester, where she leads partnerships with business and nonprofit groups and oversees philanthropic initiatives like the Girls Who Code Summer Program. She previously held roles in NYC and NYS government, focusing on advocacy, messaging, and budgets. Robin holds a B.A. from Washington University in St. Louis and an MPA from NYU. Her government and business experience will strengthen the Board's advocacy and fiscal work.

# Building a Stronger New York for Children and Families — New York State Budget 2025-2026 Update

## Investing in Families

This year's budget recognizes that investing in families is essential to New York's long-term health and prosperity. Among the most meaningful wins is the expansion of the Empire State Child Credit (ESCC), which will now provide \$1,000 per child under age four and \$500 for children ages four to seventeen. The elimination of the income phase-in ensures that more families — especially those most in need — can benefit. Starting in the 2025 tax year, this expansion offers vital support during a child's most critical early years. However, the credit is temporary and set to expire in three years. WCA will be closely monitoring its impact and advocating for a permanent, inclusive solution.

## Relief for the Early Years

Affordable, quality childcare remains a top priority for WCA and our partners. This year's budget includes a significant \$400 million investment in the Child Care Assistance Program, helping more working families afford care. Additionally, \$110 million will support the construction and renovation of childcare facilities, increasing access and capacity across the state. The introduction of the Birth Allowance for Beginning Year (BABY) Benefit — a one-time \$1,800 payment to new parents receiving public assistance — offers timely financial support at a moment of great need.

## Support Still Needed for the Child Care Workforce

While we applaud these investments, we are deeply disappointed that no direct funding was allocated to the childcare workforce — the individuals who make quality care possible. Childcare providers, many of whom are women of color, remain among the lowest-paid workers in the state. Without addressing their compensation and benefits, we cannot truly improve access or quality. WCA will continue pushing for bold, sustained investments in this essential workforce.

## Learning, Nutrition & Enrichment

Children's needs don't end when the school day does. A \$2.5 million boost to the Learning, Enrichment, and Academic Programs (LEAP) initiative will expand access to safe, engaging environments that support students beyond the classroom. Meanwhile, the \$340 million investment to provide free school meals to all students in schools participating in the National School Lunch Program marks a major step in combating food insecurity. No child should have to learn on an empty stomach.

## Nonprofit Workers Get a Needed Boost

We are encouraged by the 2.6% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for healthcare workers — an important move

POLICY AREA	FINAL BUDGET ACTION
Empire State Child Credit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• \$1,000 per child under age 4</li><li>• \$500 per child ages 4–17</li><li>• Eliminates income phase-in</li></ul>
Universal School Meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• \$340 million for free school meals for all students in schools participating in the National School Lunch Program</li></ul>
Housing Access Voucher Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• \$50 million to launch a 4-year state-funded rental assistance pilot program</li></ul>
Child Care Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• \$400 million in additional funding for Child Care Assistance Program</li><li>• \$110 million to build new and renovate existing childcare facilities</li></ul>
Birth Allowance for Beginning Year (BABY) Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• \$8.5 million to provide a one-time \$1,800 payment to public assistance recipients upon the birth of a child</li></ul>
LEAP Afterschool Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• \$2.5 million in additional funding for Learning, Enrichment, and Academic Programs (LEAP)</li></ul>

to support these professionals. WCA continues to advocate for the Prompt Contract Law under Nonprofit Westchester's leadership.

## A Victory Rooted in Advocacy

These budget wins reflect years of sustained advocacy, partnership, and a growing understanding that New York's future depends on how we invest in our children today. WCA is proud to stand with local and statewide allies to achieve these hard-fought victories. We are especially grateful to the New York State Senate, Assembly, and Governor Hochul for prioritizing children and families.

## Renewed Focus on Federal Advocacy

While we celebrate progress at the state level, the work continues at the federal level. With looming threats to foundational programs like Head Start, Medicaid, and SNAP, WCA is renewing its commitment to national advocacy. These programs are essential to early education, healthcare, and nutrition for children in Westchester and across the country.

## Our Work Is Far From Over

WCA remains steadfast in our mission to ensure every child — regardless of race, income, or zip code — has the opportunity to thrive. This budget represents a meaningful step forward, but we know lasting change requires continued vigilance, collaboration, and advocacy.



## Highlights from the 2025 Commissioners' Conversation on Children

On June 17, 2025, Westchester Children's Association hosted its third annual Commissioners' Conversation at the Greenburgh Public Library. This year's event, sponsored by the M&T Charitable Foundation, offered an opportunity for the community and government leaders to come together to discuss the pressing issues affecting children and youth in Westchester.

Approximately 100 attendees — including government, non-profit, and community leaders — filled the room to hear how the county government intended to address the various challenges facing Westchester children today. Limarie Cabrera, WCA's Director of Data, Operations, and Finance, opened the event by presenting key findings from the latest edition of *Poverty Pulse*: there has been noticeable rise in demand for assistance across several essential areas — including food, shelter, clothing, and diapers — during the first quarter of 2025.

Following the data presentation, County Executive Ken Jenkins took the stage to reflect upon the implications presented by the data. His remarks underscored the spirit of collaboration that drives the Commissioner's Conversation:

"We all know this is a really challenging time... We all know that the only way we are going to get through this is all of us pulling together... The Commissioners' Conversation... is a very valuable conversation where you get to hear directly from the people... that try to get out the data and... do the great work in partnership with all of you... The reality is that we're just trying to figure it out with all of you."

County Executive Jenkins emphasized that while the data paints a sobering picture, it also serves as a call to action — reminding everyone that behind every number is a person, a family, a community in need.

The discussion panel, moderated by Limarie Cabrera, consisted of the following county government leaders:

- Department of Health, Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD
- Department of Probation, Assistant Commissioner Rachel Kotzur
- Westchester County Youth Bureau, Executive Director Ernest McFadden
- Westchester-Putnam Career Center Network Program Administrator, Youth Development, Elizabeth Oliveto
- Department of Community Mental Health, Commissioner Michael Orth
- Department of Social Services, Commissioner Leonard Townes and Deputy Commissioner Lisette Matos



Above, from left: Leonard Townes, Rachel Kotzur, Limarie Cabrera, Dr. Sherlita Amler, Allison Lake, Lisette Matos, Elizabeth Oliveto, Ernest McFadden, and Michael Orth.

Photo, left: Audience members of the Commissioners' Conversation

Panelists were asked a series of questions, covering topics such as economic uncertainty and race equity under the current administration, and provided various strategies on how they dealt with substance abuse and an ever-changing technology environment ushering in the use, and misuse, of social media and AI.

After a short public Q&A session, Allison Lake, our Executive Director, concluded the event with these words:

"It takes all of us in this room to help children reach the potential that they have... In this time of funding uncertainty, we know we have to hold on to these pieces that support children and families, and we can't do it alone. We appreciate the hard work that is ahead for all."

The Commissioners' Conversation is, in reality, an ongoing conversation for all child advocates as we continue to commit ourselves to informed, effective action that will ensure positive outcomes for Westchester's youngest. We here at WCA expect nothing more.

## Allison Lake Celebrated for 25+ Years of Service

*(continued from page 1)*

advocacy and non-advocacy spaces, sharing her wisdom and guidance through them as they go to new heights.” She went on to say that “one of Allison’s true gifts as a supervisor and a mentor is supporting her staff to excel in ways they aren’t sure they are able to quite yet, but she knows they really are.” These words resonated among the staff listening from the audience.

Following Sarah, the Executive Director of the White Plains Youth Bureau and longtime community partner, Frank Williams, shared stories of Allison as a vital part of the fabric of Westchester as a community. Through Allison’s endless advocacy, Williams highlighted, she has always made sure that the children of Westchester were a key part of policy and program decisions in the county. The WCA Board Chair Ann Umemoto introduced Allison, reflecting on the impact that Allison had in taking WCA from “the best organization that you have never heard of” to the prime organization for children’s advocacy in Westchester County.

Lastly, Allison took to the podium and reflected on her own tenure. With great humility, she expressed appreciation for all who spoke as well as all who attended. She walked the audience through her advocacy journey, beginning with a phone call from Cora Greenberg, who was looking to hire someone to lead the expansion of CHIP (the Children’s Health Insurance Program) in Westchester County in 1998. While they both agreed that their knowledge of the healthcare field was limited, they embarked on the journey which every advocate must take: researching the facts, listening to the experience of others, educating others, and taking action for recommended change.

As she concluded her speech, she spoke about the road of advocacy that lies ahead, for herself, WCA, and Westchester County. There remains ever-present and increasing challenges for children. Allison maintained that advocates must always push for those in power to address

the inequalities which exist, whether those be related to income, zip code, or race. She noted the affluence of Westchester County, which exists alongside the deep injustices — injustices faced by students who are suspended without access to essential school instruction, or faced by those experiencing homelessness who are forced to pay a fee from their paychecks to the local shelters which house them. These injustices are the realities of many children and families living in Westchester, and we must never shy away from advocating for them.

With the conclusion of Allison’s remarks, Kelli Galloway showed WCA’s gratitude to supporters of the [Action Fund](#), created by the WCA Board of Directors to honor Allison’s legacy, and asked the audience to contribute in honor of Allison. This fund is currently ongoing and has raised over \$50,000 which will go towards expanding the data operations of WCA.

WCA would like to thank all those who attended the event, placed an ad in the Legacy Album, and sent congratulatory videos. Thank you to New York elected officials who issued proclamations in honor of Allison and who attended or sent a delegate from their office, including: Westchester County Executive Ken Jenkins; County Legislator Jewel Williams Johnson; County Legislator Ben Boykin; Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins; State Senator Shelley Mayer; State Senator Pete Harckham; Assemblymember Maryjane Shimsky; Congressman Mike Lawler; Congressman George Latimer; Senator Chuck Schumer; and, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand.

To again quote Ina Potter’s poem “Beatitudes of a Leader”, “Blessed is she who stands staunchly for what she believes. For she will have peace of mind.” To Allison, we thank you for always standing staunchly in your belief that the children of Westchester should be able to grow up healthy, safe, and prepared for life’s challenges regardless of race or zip code. The team at Westchester Children’s Association promises to carry on your legacy of advocacy!



Above, from Left: Angel Gray, Cheryl Brannan, Elizabeth Almonte, Francine Short, Sahara Lake, Allison Lake, Martha Sud, Limarie Cabrera, Khin Mai Aung, and Jewel Williams Johnson. At right: A full room celebrating Allison!



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*Executive Director*

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**WESTCHESTER  
children's  
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**SAVE THE DATE**

**Save Tuesday,  
October 21, 2025  
from 8-11 AM  
for WCA's 2025  
Advocacy Breakfast**

***Advocacy  
in a Time of  
Change***

We hope  
you'll join us  
for our annual  
Kathryn  
Wasserman  
Davis Lecture  
featuring speaker  
**Damali Peterman, Esq.**,  
author and specialist  
in conflict management  
and negotiation.



**SUPPORT WCA**

**The Allison Lake Action Fund  
Continues Through Summer**

The Board of Directors of Westchester Children's Association (WCA) is proud to announce that the Action Fund, launched in honor of Allison Lake's 25+ years of service — including the last seven as Executive Director — has already raised \$50,000, thanks to the generosity of our incredible supporters.

**To everyone who has donated so far:  
we thank you. Your contributions  
help build a lasting legacy that honors  
Allison's visionary leadership and deep  
commitment to Westchester's children.**

This fund will allow WCA to invest in data-driven advocacy to ensure that every child in Westchester — regardless of race or zip code — deserves to be healthy, safe, and ready to thrive.

**If you haven't already donated, please  
consider making a donation today.  
Any amount is appreciated.**

**WESTCHESTER  
children's  
ASSOCIATION**

**THE  
allison lake  
ACTION FUND**

*The fund will remain  
open through the  
summer, and we  
invite all who believe  
in this vision to join  
us in carrying Allison's  
legacy forward.*

*Scan this QR code  
to make an online  
donation, or visit  
[wca4kids.org/donate](https://wca4kids.org/donate).*

