



THE LEGISLATURE

STATE OF NEW YORK

ALBANY

*****Press Release*****

For Immediate Release

August 2, 2021

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Lawmakers, advocates, and child care providers call on Governor Cuomo to extend child care waivers

The end to the state of emergency has had many unintended consequences, including the end of child care waivers that have allowed struggling families to obtain the care they need and deserve while also guaranteeing child care providers a stream of income. Waivers have allowed that care and income stream to continue but without an extension, families, children and providers will be left without critical support.

ALBANY, NY- New York State legislators, child care providers, advocates, and members of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care as well as Winning Beginning NY, met for a virtual press conference on Wednesday July 28, urging Governor Cuomo to extend the much-needed child care waivers that have helped keep families afloat throughout the pandemic. With the abrupt end to the state of emergency, many families now face an increase in child care costs, and child care providers will likely experience a sharp drop in income when families can no longer afford to send their children to their facilities.

While a thirty-day grace period through July 30 was granted for some of the waivers, this limited period is quickly coming to an end and remains an inadequate protection for the thousands of families who will soon receive notice that their child care costs will rise from zero

dollars a month to hundreds or even thousands. It is equally devastating to the child care providers who will see this lifeline of support end, just as parents are returning to work and children are returning to care.

We cannot allow those most impacted by the pandemic—namely Black and Brown families and providers (the majority of them women)-- to fall victim to the unintended consequences set in motion by the lifting of the state of emergency. We must extend these waivers so our children can continue to receive the care they need at a rate their families can afford while at the same time funding providers, ensuring their ability to operate. Before any extension is over, we must swiftly implement initiatives that were passed in the 2021 State Budget to ensure that no family falls off a cliff come September. The plan outlined in the Budget will transform child care if implemented appropriately, until proper implementation occurs, we must extend these waivers that have been a lifeline for our children, families, and providers.

“Ending the childcare subsidy waivers this week is an unforced error from Governor Cuomo. Hundreds of New York’s most vulnerable families will lose their childcare precisely when they are expected to return to work. Our childcare providers and workforce, the same heroes that got us through the pandemic, will take a hit via decreased enrollment and reimbursement,” **said Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi, Chair of the Assembly Children and Families Committee** “We are on a path to create the childcare system that all of our kids need and deserve, due in large part to cooperation between the legislature and the Governor in this year’s budget. We have agreed on a complex series of investments through use of federal and future state dollars on this system change, with money set to go out the door in weeks. There is more policy change and investment on the way. The additional hardship placed on kids, parents, our providers and workforce by not extending these waivers when we have ample resources, is a profound failure. We can and must do better,”

“It is imperative that NYS extend the child care waivers that A) helped keep programs in business and B) helped families afford care throughout the pandemic. Until additional supports are in place--using the influx of funding NYS received in federal relief money--many providers and parents will struggle. With parents just now getting back to work, they need child care more than ever. And since our youngest children cannot yet be vaccinated, we need to protect them at all costs by supporting the people who care for them on a daily basis. PCANY urges Governor Cuomo to extend these waivers through September,” **said Jenn O'Connor, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Prevent Child Abuse New York**

“With the darkest days of the pandemic behind us, there is still much work to be done to ensure a fully inclusive sustainable recovery. There are many families both in the North Country and throughout the State who depend on affordable access to child care services as they look to re-

enter the workplace and rebuild their lives. The State should utilize existing funds to ensure that these efforts are not impeded and prematurely cut short. We must have the backs of these families and extend the child care waivers, **said Assemblyman Matthew Simpson, 114th AD.**

“One of the largest impediments to getting the workforce thriving again is the lack of quality, affordable child care,” **said Assemblyman William Magnarelli.** “Ending waivers now will cause working families to face a huge increase in child care costs. Child care providers, who are still being affected by the impact of the pandemic, will face a drop in enrollment and a subsequent drop in income. The waiver must be extended.”

"While much of New York State is returning to a semblance of normalcy, lack of access to affordable child care remains at a crisis level which will only grow after waivers expire [today](#)", **said Senator Roxanne J. Persaud, Chair of the Senate Social Services Committee.**

"Neighborhood child care centers, operated predominantly by women of color, have yet to recover from pandemic-related revenue losses. Families in Brooklyn continue to be crushed by tough economic conditions; and loss of affordable child care will further stifle our economic recovery."

"Child care is an investment in our current and future workforce, our economy, and our quality of life. It bolsters educational achievement, enhances consistent participation in the workforce, increases social and economic productivity, and mitigates poverty. It's so critical that we support initiatives that make child care more accessible, which is why I urge the Governor to extend waivers for child care subsidy eligibility through at least September. He has already extended this waiver for New York City, showing that there is legal precedent. The Governor should now extend this waiver for the whole state," **said Assemblymember Anna Kelles.**

"Extending the child care waivers is crucial to the current survival of children and families. Home and center child care Providers continue to be affected by loss of enrollment and revenue which compromises the ability to continue daily operations and pay staff. Therefore, they are constantly under threat or forced to close. Although New York State is in the midst of reopening and resurging the economy, parents are still climbing out of the hole of debt while almost magically balancing the protective factors like food, water, clothing, shelter, and even education for their children. The monthly cost of child care can surpass these aforementioned expenses. Parents cannot maintain employment if there is no fluid access to affordable quality child care, especially now. Extending the waivers will assist parents with transitioning back to the workforce and ultimately supporting a safe and secure quality of life for children and families. Discontinuing the waivers now will be the set up of a dismal winter," **said Vonetta T. Rhodes, Parent/Educator/Advocate, WNY Child Care Action Team.**

"One of the many things this pandemic has revealed is how critical child care is to supporting our economy. Without child care, employees can't work, and businesses can't operate. New York State must do everything it can to help employees get back to work, and that includes immediately extending child care subsidy waivers for at least another 90 days. These waivers are critical to keeping child care centers open and ensuring that parents have a safe place for their children when they return to the workforce," **said Assemblymember Monica Wallace, (D-143).**

"I represent a district where 1 in 2 children live in poverty. For many child care providers and families in Rochester, the twin public health and economic crises of Covid-19 only made a dire situation worse. We have an opportunity to extend the child care waiver and continue providing care and support to the families and children who need it most," **said Senator Jeremy Cooney.**

Assemblymember John T. McDonald said, "Thank you to my colleague Andrew Hevesi for leading the effort to extend the child care waivers. Our child care providers have been essential throughout the pandemic and we must do all that we can to support them and our working families who rely on having safe and affordable providers that they can entrust their children with. I join my colleagues in calling for implementation of the programs that were passed in the NYS Budget this year along with ensuring that families have access to the waivers and can return to work and get our economy back on track."

Assemblymember Karen McMahon (D-Amherst) said, "Child care is an industry that is essential to the health of our work force and our economy. The child care waivers have been a lifeline for both working families and providers during the pandemic, many of whom still need our support. We implore the Governor to extend the waivers at least until New York State has implemented the changes approved in the budget and launches the child care stabilization grants."

"During the COVID 19 pandemic, child care providers and families were adversely affected by the loss of income. Child care waivers were a Godsend in allowing families and child care providers to survive and stay afloat. However, the end of this program this month is premature and will be a setback for those it was intended to assist. Therefore, I join my legislative colleagues in requesting an extension of this benefit so that all involved have a better opportunity to get back on their feet," **said Assemblywoman Inez E. Dickens.**

"I stand with my colleague Assembly Member Hevesi as a member of the Committee on Children and Families in support of extending the much needed child care waivers that have

been instrumental in supporting our families across New York State. We must protect the viability and livelihood of those most impacted by this pandemic, mostly working class, socio-economically disadvantaged families. Parents along with their children, have experienced significant grief, loss, and trauma exposure during this pandemic. We owe it to all the families of New York State to extend these waivers so that they can continue to receive the care they need at a rate their families can afford,” **said Assemblyman Khaleel Anderson.**

"Affordable child care is essential to a thriving economy and a more equitable society. There is so much more we can and should do to make child care affordable for working families, and abruptly halting the waivers at this time is a huge step in the wrong direction. This will be detrimental to so many families and providers that have been counting on these waivers to stay afloat. First, we need to extend the waivers. Next, we need to address the long-term issue of affordable child care," **said Assemblyman Chris Burdick.**

"At a time when low- and middle-income families are finally just starting to get back on their feet, the worst thing state government could do is pull the rug out from under them. But that's exactly what the unforeseen elimination of childcare waivers will do for thousands of families all over this state. New York's moms and dads need to be able to get back to work, and we shouldn't make them bend over backwards to ensure their kids are cared for. I urge the Governor to extend these subsidy waivers,” **said Senator James Skoufis.**

“As we move forward with the recovery process, the continued uncertainty of the pandemic and combating a statewide labor shortage, now is not the time to turn our backs on our parents, guardians, childcare providers and children. I urge the Governor to extend the statewide child care pandemic subsidies that are essential to our families well-being,” **said Assemblyman Charles D. Fall.**

Assemblywoman Sarah Clark said, “If these waivers expire, there will be a detrimental effect on already struggling families that have received quality child care this year at little to no cost. These subsidies have enabled thousands of New Yorkers to access care for their children, while also helping to make our child care providers whole after a very challenging year. At this time, extending these waivers is the ethical and economically correct decision as we begin to stabilize the child care system through huge new investments. We cannot allow our families and providers to flounder when critical support is needed now more than ever.”

"The pandemic is not over for New York's families or New York's child care providers many of whom are still struggling with the health and economic devastation of COVID-19" **said Tara N**

Gardner, Executive Director of the Day Care Council of New York "New York State must take full advantage of the flexibility the federal government allows to stabilize child care services as the State recovers."

"During the pandemic, New York families received child care subsidies and waivers which helped provide free or low cost child care. Now is not the time to end these subsidies. It will certainly force parents to make difficult financial decisions and risk the closure of child care providers who were struggling even before COVID. There has to be a way for these subsidies to continue; our economic recovery depends on them," **said Assemblymember Donna Lupardo.**

"Families and childcare providers are relying on subsidies issued during the state of emergency," **said Senator Samra G. Brouk.** "To abruptly end them right now hurts families, hurts children, and ultimately hurts our economic recovery. We must extend these waivers until we have a system in place to mitigate the effects of their cancellation."

"The pandemic exposed and amplified a childcare crisis that has long been leaving families with an impossible choice: to work to support their children, or to sacrifice income in order to care for their children. Really, that's no choice at all. Across the world, other governments have found ways to provide subsidized childcare, and we know from these precedents that universal, low-fee childcare is not just good for kids and parents, it's also economically advantageous," **said Assemblyman Bill Conrad,** "Child care is critical infrastructure. If we're to recover from the pandemic and build a better future, we must facilitate citizens' - especially women's - return to the workforce. I join my colleagues in calling for an extension of the waivers. That would mark New York State's commitment to its working families and its children, and hopefully also pave the way for ongoing discussions around subsidized child care."

"Parents should never have to choose between safe, quality child care and going to work. This is a concept we acknowledged and addressed through historic investments in our fiscal year 2022 budget. During the COVID-19 pandemic child care waivers helped thousands of families stay financially afloat while children received the care they need and deserve. Until we are able to implement the measures passed in our most recent budget, I believe we should extend those waivers," **said Senator Toby Ann Stavisky.**

"To end the child care waivers now would be a step back for our recovery. I urge Governor Cuomo to do all that is within his power to extend the waivers," **said Assemblyman David Weprin.** "Families in New York are still struggling as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Child

care waivers are critical to the City's economic recovery. They allow parents to return to work and provide a much needed source of revenue to our small business child care providers."

"The COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on just how crucial accessible child care is to keeping our working families afloat and moving New York forward. As we continue fighting the ongoing pandemic, we desperately need to extend the waivers made available for families and providers alike so that the needs of our youngest residents can continue to be met while providing parents and providers with the peace of mind and stability they need to continue going above and beyond for our communities during these extremely challenging times," **said Assemblywoman Kimberly Jean-Pierre.**

"New York State provided a make-or-break lifeline for child care programs by allowing counties to pay subsidy based on enrollment rather than attendance. [New survey findings from NAEYC](#) show that consistent support played a major role in staving off the mass closures we all feared. To remove this stability now, before stabilization funds are ready for release, could cause this already precarious situation to crumble just as Governor Cuomo is calling for New Yorkers to return to the office if they have not already," **said Katie Albitz, Public Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, New York Association for the Education of Young Children** "With our youngest children still unable to be vaccinated, temporary closures to protect them from exposure should not threaten the financial stability of programs that serve low-income families who rely on child care subsidy. Unfortunately, that's exactly what will happen with waivers no longer in place. Governor Cuomo can choose to support our essential child care workforce by extending these waivers, and we implore him to do so."

"While the worst of the pandemic is behind us, New York families continue to live in a near-constant state of emergency when it comes to childcare. Childcare providers are still struggling to find adequate staffing; summer programs are still operating at limited capacity; and many parents are still out of work as they await guidance on whether their children will return to school full time in the fall. The abrupt end to childcare waivers has pulled the rug out from under families who need all the help they can get to dig themselves out of the hole COVID created for them. We urge the Governor to extend the waivers to cover the gap between the end of the state of emergency and the effective date of the changes made in the previous budget. We also ask that the remaining CARES Act funding be allocated to continue scholarships for workers still struggling to pay for childcare," **said Assemblywoman Jen Lunsford.**

"As New York State strives to accelerate its economic recovery and help parents return to the workforce, it is critical that quality, affordable childcare is available. That is why I am advocating

for an extension of the child care waivers, which have eased the financial hardships faced by both families and providers during the pandemic and preserved a much-needed sense of stability. Particularly with our economy being hurt by the labor shortage, we have to make it easier, not harder, for parents to return to the workforce. This is an important step we can take in that direction,” **said Senator George Borrello, 57th District.**

“Throughout the pandemic, thousands of families have relied on child care subsidy waivers for free or low-cost child care. With the pandemic still ravaging our communities, we must keep these protections in place to support our childcare workers, and families with children. It’s the right thing to do to protect our community and get New York back to work, building a more equitable economy for all,” **said Assemblyman Demond Meeks.**

“We cannot fully recover from the aftermath of the pandemic without addressing the child care crisis which is now hindering our economic recovery. The subsidy waivers were a lifeline for families who needed stability. Now is not the time to turn our backs on hard working families and their children. Our kids deserve better. Extending the waivers is not only economically necessary but morally imperative,” **said Assemblyman Fred Thiele.**

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