

Dear Honorable Senator/Assembly member _____ (last name)

I am writing as a concerned citizen (and parent/grandparent/business owner/teacher) to urge your support for legislation to establish a bipartisan legislative Task Force to address a growing child care crisis in New York. Specific legislation has been introduced by Assembly member Jaffee (A7726) and Senator Avella (S5929). A similar bill has also been introduced by Senator Tim Kennedy (S6332) which demonstrates the high interest in this issue.

Access to quality child care is foundational for a child's short and long term emotional, social and educational development. It is also critical to the economic stability of working families; without access to affordable child care families are pushed into economic stress and poverty. Access to child care particularly impacts regional work force availability, stability and productivity; without access, parents are forced to reduce hours or leave the work force.

In New York, however, increased costs and cuts in subsidies are putting quality childcare beyond the reach of an increasing number of working parents. New York childcare costs are the highest in the nation. The recent small increase in tax credits for child care was a step, but will do little to stop the overall failure of the system to meet existing needs. A lack of access to regulated child care services is forcing too many children into low quality and sometimes unhealthy or risky environments with long range negative implications for their educational development. Market rates used to establish the subsidies owed to providers are no longer even close to the cost of providing the service, leading to wage and staffing cuts and closures.

Further, pay for child care workers is inconsistent, even within the same facility, due to the complex array of funding streams, and is significantly less than what is paid to early school teachers with the same academic credentials, leading to ongoing problems of recruitment and retention. Fair wages, essential benefits and a path to professionalism are necessary to increase stability and quality in the child care labor force.

For all these reasons, I believe the establishment of a Task Force is a critical step and should be done without delay. I would also urge that any Task Force legislation include adequate resources and composition to ensure success. Solutions will require both private and public investment, creativity and collaboration. But it can and must be done. Otherwise the weight of the child care crisis will continue to hold back our state's much needed economic development and create long lasting problems for schools, families and business.

Sincerely,

Name
Address
Phone