



THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

CHAIRMAN
Children and Families Committee

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Health
Labor

Honorable Kathy Hochul,
Governor, New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

April 22, 2024

Dear Governor Hochul,

I am writing to you today to respectfully express my sincere and deep concern at some of the actions that you and your administration have taken, and intentionally not taken, related to our public policy goals for the children and families of the Great State of New York. This message is an effort to realign our shared goals so we can successfully work together on their behalf.

I have never made a secret of my disdain for your predecessor in the Governor's Mansion. The former Governor operated in Albany for over a decade and each year would intentionally attempt to cut funding and programs serving children and families. His executive budget proposals during his tenure read like a 'how to' manual for policymakers with the goal of pushing as many children into homelessness as possible. Unfortunately, he was successful in that effort, with the New York Times reporting that New York City has more homeless children than ever before. It's not just impacting NYC, Syracuse and Rochester are two of the top five cities with the highest child poverty rate in the United States.

Although I have always believed that the former Governor's policies were mean spirited and short sighted, having bad policy ideas is not a crime. The primary issue I had with the former Governor was his non-stop, reflexive, and compulsive lying. He lied about his intentions, claiming to be a champion for children and then undercut every policy to actually keep families together and help children succeed. It's the lying that I cannot stomach.

Recently, your office released a message about how, based on your own personal experience, you fully understand the difficulty parents face when trying to access child care, "We're taking action to expand access to child care and give everyone a chance to succeed." I appreciate that, and have heard it before when you successfully, with the assistance of Speaker Heastie and Majority Leader Cousins, shepherded through the largest single investment in expanding access to child care in the history of the state of New York several years ago. Now, however, that claim was truly disingenuous.

Your actions in the last year and particularly this budget cycle have been atrocious for child care in New York State.

To begin, your administration— even though required by law— has yet to release the final report of the Child Care Availability Task Force. That report includes several recommendations, but it's number one priority is a permanent solution to the workforce compensation issue. We needed that report before the budget this year, we did not get it and **your Task Force violated the law by not providing it in the time frame outlined in the statute.**

The delayed Task Force report is not the only place that your leadership fell short. In this particular budget cycle, the Assembly and Senate brought forth several proposals that would have helped children access child care.

Both houses proposed language for a cost estimation study to determine the true market rate and cost of providing child care. The cost of accepting this language would have been \$250,000, a tiny drop in a budget bucket totaling in the hundreds of billions of dollars. **You rejected this proposal.** I assume that the reason for that is that you didn't want to know the true cost of child care in New York, because the legislature would be pushing for covering that true cost in future years.

The legislature also proposed language in this budget to decouple a parent's work schedule from their child's ability to access full time child care. This is a policy you have seen before. It was first passed several years ago and signed into law by your administration (12/16/22). At that time, after it was signed into law, your administration figured out that we had changed the wrong section of law and that what we had done actually achieved nothing. I take responsibility for that mistake. However, your administration could have amended the law through the chapter amendment process but chose not to. We were then forced to redo the entire process, losing years of valuable time. When we finally passed it again, you vetoed (12/22/23) it with a message that it must be addressed during this year's budget process. **Then, during that process, you rejected the decoupling proposal yet again.**

Both houses of the legislature also proposed creating a PERMANENT workforce fund for child care providers/educators, who are in the 96th percentile of the lowest paid workers in the State. Each house provided \$220 million in their respective one house budgets for that purpose, because there is consensus among every child care expert in New York, including those on your Task Force, that we cannot recruit and retain child care providers/educators due to the poverty wages they are currently paid. **You rejected spending that money on the child care workforce,** and you even rejected using language without funding as a placeholder for our future intention to pay the workforce. To add insult to injury, you touted investments in the workforce on the national stage this week—when that funding is in fact leftover federal pandemic dollars that will serve as a band-aid and only be available to a limited number of providers/educators.

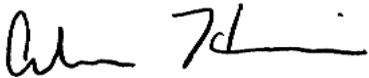
While I am tempted to continue this message with other bad budget decisions that you and your administration have made this budget on topics like Raise the Age and your administration's continued violation of the law regarding the 65/35 reimbursement for preventative services for children and families, among other child-related policies, I will end with this.

While I am extremely disappointed with our lack of partnership and the unforced errors this year, it is your attempt to claim the mantle of a child care champion to whom this issue is personal,

while quietly obstructing or outright rejecting the budget proposals to assist children, families, and child care providers that I cannot tolerate. Again, it is the lying that I cannot and will not stomach.

I hope we can reset with true partnership and prospectively work together to actually assist New York's children—not just say we did—while you actually actively worked against them. I believe you are a better Governor than that.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Hevesi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "A" and a long, sweeping underline.

Andrew Hevesi, Chair
Committee on Children and Families