



2019 Public Policy Agenda

November 2018

OUR VISION: All parents have access to affordable, quality early care and education options that enable them to work and advance in their careers and launch their children for success in school and life, so that Westchester has a skilled and productive workforce today and tomorrow. Child care programs reach and sustain high quality levels, able to retain and keep motivated, skilled and fairly compensated professionals and enhance the development and lives of our children.

CURRENT REALITY: One of the most expensive places for child care in the U.S., Westchester center-based infant care averages nearly \$21,000 annually. Westchester's child care subsidy parent share is high at 27% (of income over 100% FPL), and Title XX has been closed to new families since August 2016. The high cost of child care is not just an issue for lower wage earners, but for parents at every income level. Many borrow from family and friends, use credit cards, juggle their bills and sometimes even sacrifice higher quality care in order to lower child care costs. Despite high fees, most child care businesses have a hard time meeting their own operating expenses. Staff salaries are alarmingly low, and benefits modest, leading to high turnover that undermines consistency and quality of care. Statewide, only about 22% of children eligible for the child care subsidy actually receive it due to funding limitations. While state funding for universal preK has increased in recent years, only 14 of 40 Westchester school districts currently receive grants.

WHAT WE SUPPORT:

More investment from every level of government so that...

Westchester

- Title XX subsidies are available to new families
- Program reimbursements are increased to cover the real costs of quality
- Programs can use absence reimbursements more flexibly to cover fixed operating costs

NYS

- Subsidy slots expand statewide
- \$5 million to the CCRR Network to improve the quality of infant-toddler care statewide
- The 75% percentile formula for subsidy reimbursement rates is reinstated
- PreK funding is increased outside NYC
- The child and dependant care tax credit is increased to better reflect true costs
- Immigrant families have access to quality child care

U.S.

- Investments in child care subsidy, Head Start/Early Head Start and PreK Development Grants continue to rise
- The Child Care for Working Families Act is passed and funded

More private investment of funds and talent from individuals, businesses and foundations so that...

- The Council strives to award at least 30 child care scholarships annually to working parents
- Innovative business models are implemented to expand child care options for parents, lower child care costs and increase program quality
- More parents, employers and community leaders understand, demand and receive quality programs

More coordinated planning and integration of programs, funding streams and regulations so that:

- Changes in one program do not negatively impact the others
- Options meet the real needs of parents including those working full-time and/or non-traditional hours
- Child care professionals are reasonably compensated and have pathways for career growth
- Child care is recognized as part of a larger system that includes PreK, public, religious and charter schools