



2024 Budget & Policy Priorities for Child Poverty Reduction

As a diverse group of organizations working to improve both immediate and long-term outcomes for children and families experiencing economic hardship, we urge the State to act to **reduce child poverty and racial inequity, starting by ensuring robust tax credits and cash assistance, continuous health coverage, and housing and nutritional supports for all families who need them, no matter where they were born.** All children, and particularly children residing across the great state of New York, should grow up free from the stress and strains of poverty.

Investments in children and families are vehicles that help our children, economy, and society thrive. Our campaign takes the firm position that the governor and legislature should exhaust all avenues, including progressive revenue-raising options, to ensure that New York fully invests in services essential to the well-being of New York children and families, especially those from low-income, Black, brown, immigrant and other historically marginalized communities.

Goal 1: Make New York affordable for families. Increased income for families in or near poverty has been shown to be an effective poverty-fighting tool. The State should take decisive action to bolster its refundable tax credits so they can most effectively support New York families. To address this, the budget should:

- **Include the Working Families Tax Credit, S.277B Gounardes/A.4022B Hevesi**, which combines and strengthens two existing refundable tax credits: the Empire State Child Credit (ESCC) and state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), creating one more inclusive and generous Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC). For individual New Yorkers and families currently eligible for the ESCC, EITC, or both, the combined credit they would receive from the WFTC would be greater, or equal to the total of the two credits. For the lowest income, and many immigrant New Yorkers, the credit amount would be greater under the WFTC.
- **Strengthen New York's child tax credit** so it reaches the poorest New Yorkers, currently excluded from the full credit, and increase the credit amount. Eliminating the income phase-in from the Empire State Child Credit will maximize its poverty-fighting potential and reduce racial disparities among children benefiting from the program.
- **Strengthen the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)** so all working New Yorkers who are eligible may file, including those filing with an Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN), as is permitted with the ESCC, and increase the value of the credit.

- **Establish the Mothers & Infants Lasting Change (MILC) allowance**, S.4578A Ramos / A.6197A Clark. The MILC allowance, established as a pilot in this bill, would provide financial support to parents of infants at a critical period in their lives.

Goal 2: Stabilize housing and reduce costs for thousands of families, by:

- **Funding the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP)**, which would create a state-funded voucher that would operate much like the federal Section 8 program. A commitment of \$250 million toward HAVP would have a transformative impact, aiding nearly 15,000¹ families or individuals in exiting or preventing homelessness.
- **Increasing the Public Assistance housing allowance** to a level that stabilizes housing for more families. Currently at a statewide average of \$347 for a household of four², the PA housing allowance was last adjusted over twenty years ago – in 2003³.

Goal 3: Remove administrative barriers that prevent families from accessing, or cause families to lose access to, critical programs, including:

- **Ensure all eligible children remain continuously enrolled from birth to age 6 in Medicaid and Child Health Plus (CHP) health coverage**, which provide no- or low-cost health coverage for eligible children. New York can – and should – commit to multi-year continuous coverage as have several other states, including Washington, Oregon, California, Ohio, Minnesota, and Colorado. The time to do this is now, as the current administration in Washington, DC has demonstrated an openness to the policy.
- **Establish and fund a permanent, statewide Healthy School Meals for All program** that provides school breakfast and lunch at no cost to all students in schools participating in the National School Lunch Program. Healthy School Meals for All is a proven strategy that reduces food insecurity and helps lift families out of poverty. In the FY2024 state budget, lawmakers took a critical step in this direction, investing in the expansion of an existing federal provision – the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) – that allows high-poverty schools to provide free meals at no cost to all students. However, CEP does not reach all children. CEP eligibility is tied to participation in means-tested programs such as SNAP and Medicaid, which have well-established barriers for many families, including immigrant families. Schools in rural and suburban communities and areas with stark economic inequalities also struggle to qualify for CEP.

The New York CAN End Child Poverty group strongly supports the following efforts:

- The [Empire State Campaign for Child Care's priorities](#), including **universal child care**.
- S.7663 May/A. 06214 Gonzalez-Rojas which would create a **SNAP minimum** benefit program, increasing minimum benefit in New York State to \$100.
- **Paid Medical Leave**, led by A Better Balance

¹ https://furmancenter.org/files/publications/2_A_State-Level_Rent_Voucher_Program_Final.pdf

² <https://otda.ny.gov/news/meetings/attachments/2023-03-07-CPRAC-Shelter-Allowance.pdf>

³ <https://otda.ny.gov/news/meetings/cprac/2023-08-10/attachments/2023-08-10-OTDA-Presentation.pdf>