Advocates for Children of New York
Protecting every child's right to learn

Testimony submitted to the New York State Assembly
Standing Committee on Children and Families

Re: Child Care Assistance for Low-Income Families

December 16, 2015

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Advocates for Children of New York (AFC) appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony concerning the need for increased funding for child care for low-income families. For more than 40 years, AFC has worked to promote access to the best education New York can provide for all students, especially students of color and students from low-income backgrounds. Every year, we help thousands of New York City parents and students navigate the education system. We use our on-the-ground experience to identify barriers to education and work to pursue systemic change. We are also a proud member of the Winning Beginning New York coalition.

As an education advocacy organization, we know that the first five years of children's lives have a profound impact on their education and future. By the time children enter kindergarten, children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds lag significantly behind children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds in academic skills. High-quality early childhood education programs are proven to help fill this gap. Long-term research shows that children from low-income backgrounds who are left out of high-quality early childhood education programs are more likely to be retained a grade, be placed in special education classes, and drop out of high school than their peers who participate in such programs. Leading economists have found that high-quality early childhood education programs are cost-effective, providing taxpayers with a strong return on investment by reducing spending on remedial instruction, special education, public assistance, and the criminal justice system.

For many families with low incomes, subsidized child care provides the only opportunity to access early childhood education for their children. However, due to limited funding, only around twenty-two percent of income-eligible children have access to subsidized child care in New York State.

We are pleased that the recent federal reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant included new quality standards. However, it will cost an estimated $90 million for New York State to implement the new health and safety standards alone. This $90 million cost does not account for the costs associated with implementing other parts of the new federal requirements. Given the significant unmet need that already exists, we want to ensure that the State does not fund these

new requirements by decreasing the number of children accessing child care. Rather, the State must provide increased funding for these new requirements and provide additional funding to increase the number of children who have access to child care subsidies.

We recommend that the State budget include:

- At least an additional **$90 million** to cover the cost of implementing the new federal health and safety requirements of the Child Care and Development Block Grant.
- At least an additional **$100 million** to provide child care subsidies to an additional 13,000 children from low-income backgrounds.

While securing adequate funding for child care should be a priority of the Legislature, we also urge you to ensure that children with delays and disabilities, children of immigrant parents, and children who are homeless or in foster care have access to child care programs and are served well. For example, child care subsidies can be extremely beneficial for children who are homeless, providing them with a safe, supportive environment where they can prepare for kindergarten and allowing their parents to look for housing or work. However, currently, children who are homeless are not eligible for child care subsidies unless they meet other eligibility criteria. We urge the State to revise the eligibility criteria to make children who are homeless categorically eligible for child care subsidies. Advocates for Children would be pleased to partner with you to advance such policies.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. Please do not hesitate to contact Randi Levine, Project Director of AFC's Early Childhood Education Project, at (212) 822-9532 or rlevine@advocatesforchildren.org with any questions you may have.