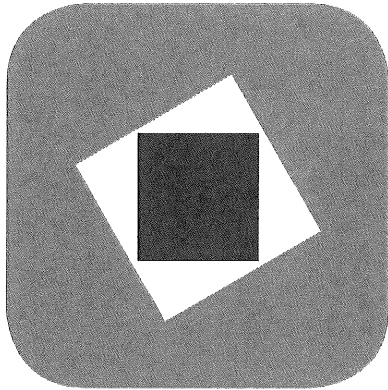


Submitting Testimony



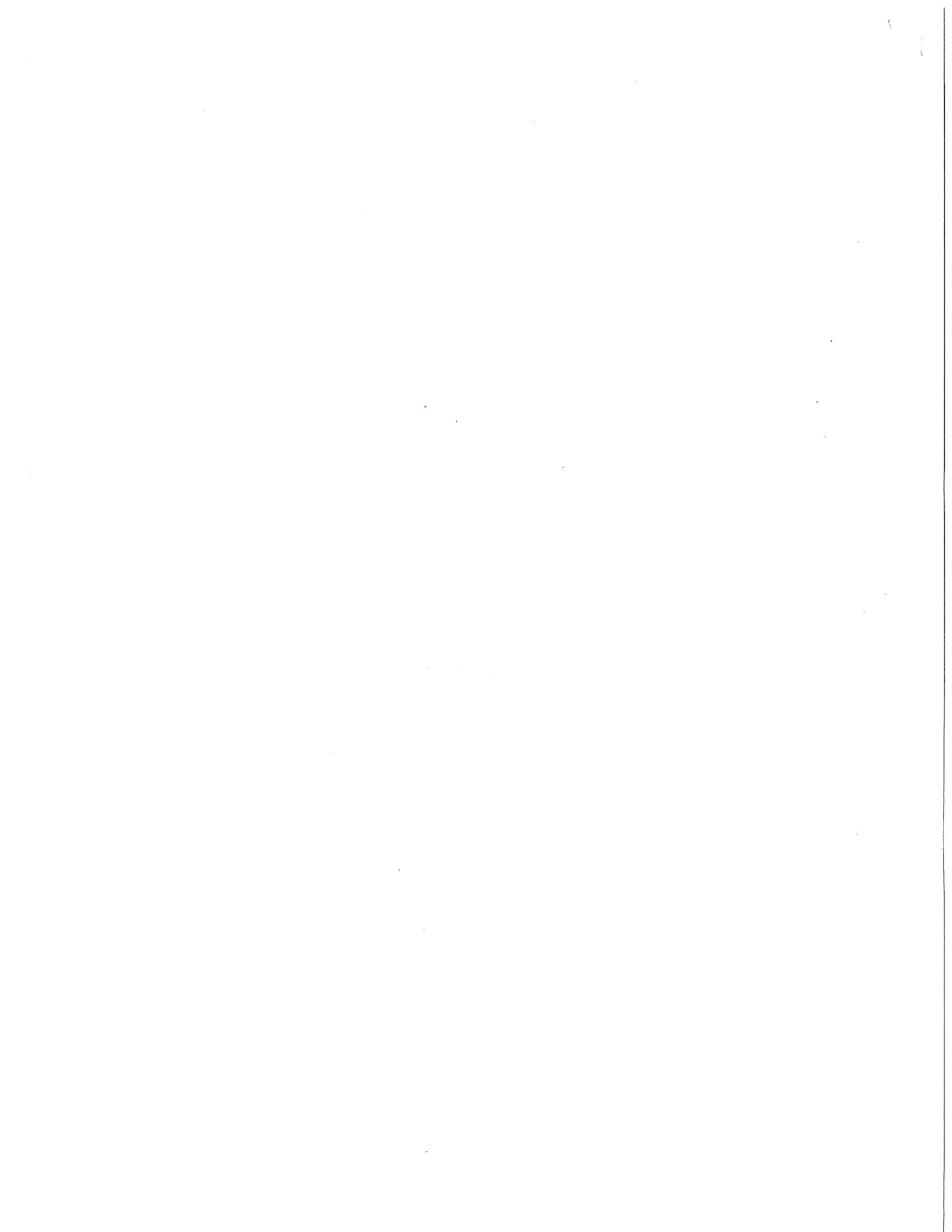
early care &  
Learning COUNCIL

*New York's child care resource network*

**Joint Legislative Public Hearing on  
2015-2016 Executive Budget Proposal:  
Elementary and Secondary Education**

Submitted by  
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Public Policy Director

February 3, 2015

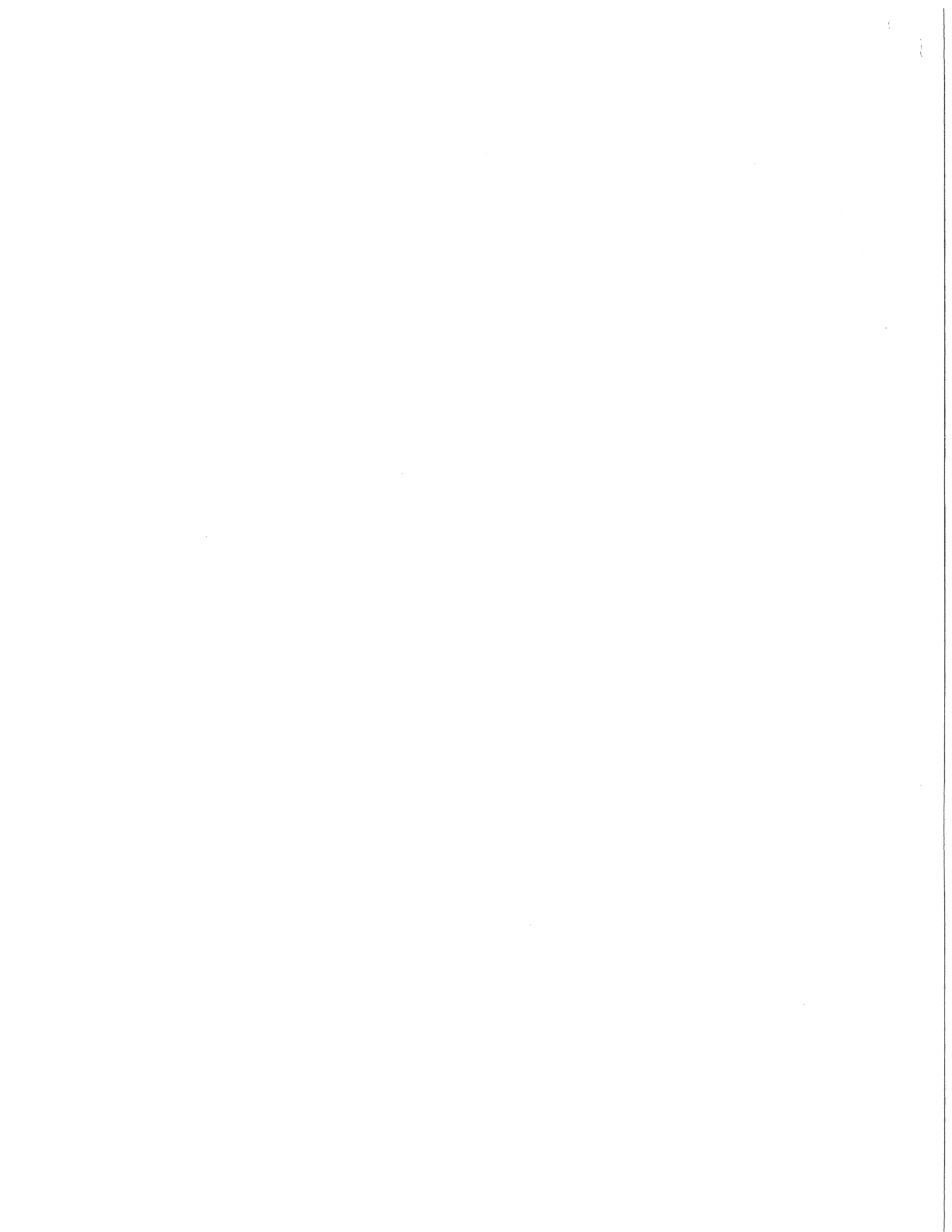


Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and input on Governor Cuomo's proposed budget for New York State. The Early Care & Learning Council is a statewide, not-for-profit organization, whose mission is to promote excellence in early care and education with equal access for all families. We do this primarily through the support of, and in partnership with, a strong network of community-based organizations that provide Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) services. The Early Care & Learning Council is also a leader within *Winning Beginning NY*, the State's early care and development coalition.

We ask that the legislature increase the Executive's \$3 million investment in strengthening the quality of early learning through the implementation of QUALITYstarsNY. This would continue to expand the quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) that fully utilizes the professional development and technical assistance services embedded within the existing state funded network of 35 child care resource and referral (CCR&R) programs, and that establishes Quality Resource Centers located with the CCR&Rs around the state.

An increased investment would further the capacity of the experienced CCR&R network to provide critical family supports to currently underserved parents across New York State and to strengthen the child care services so essential to New York's economic development. Additional investment will enable CCR&Rs to communicate the benefits of participating in a QRIS through orientation and readiness training across the state, deliver on-site coaching and individualized professional development, as well as education. Children deserve appropriately-funded and professionally supported child care and early learning programs that promote their optimal development and learning. It is the only way to close the achievement gap!

Investment in high-quality early care and learning programs lays the foundation upon which lifelong learning and socio-emotional skills are built, and is therefore a critical component of building a comprehensive and effective state education system. Long-term study of children from high-risk families have shown that those who received full-time, high-quality early childcare from infancy to age five showed significantly positive education gains over their age matched peers. They completed more total years of education and were more likely to attend a 4-year college than their age matched peers. From primary school into early adulthood, they also continued to score higher on intellectual and academic measures, and maintained higher reading and math



skills<sup>1</sup>. The financial return on investment in excellent early interventions is also significant, reducing the need for spending on special education, remediation, and grade retention<sup>2</sup>. Current efforts to expand to universal pre-school in New York State and increase child care subsidies are a reflection of the value of, and our commitment to, early educational interventions that are critical to the long-term success of our children. However, without a system designed to evaluate and improve the quality of our state's early care and learning programs, we cannot guarantee that the funds invested in early education initiatives are positively improving children's academic outcomes.

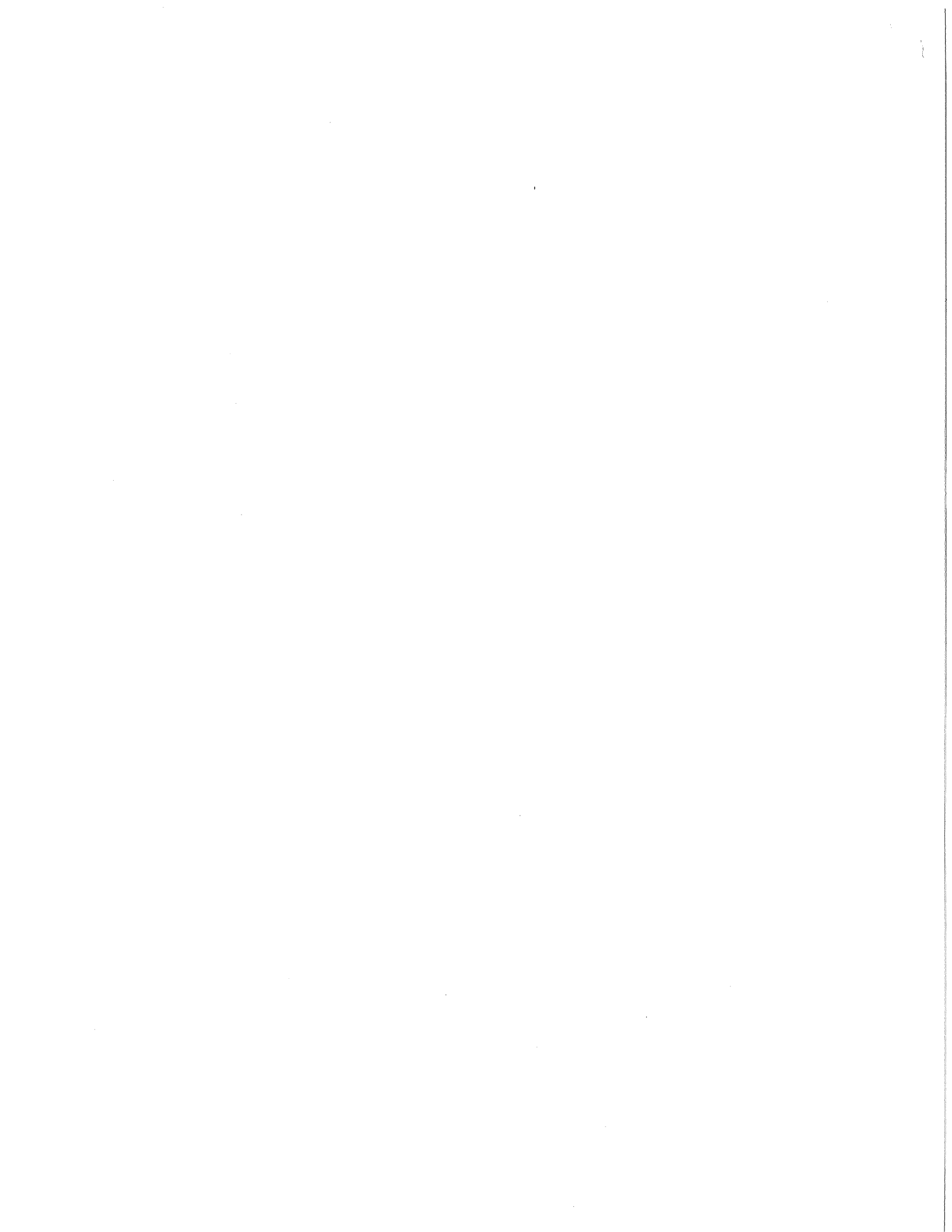
To date over thirty-five states have implemented a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), which is used to assess, evaluate and communicate the level of quality in early childhood programs. The development of a QRIS program designed for the specific needs of New York was initiated by a group of early childhood education experts convened by our agency, the Early Care and Learning Council, and has since become a priority initiative administered and implemented by the Early Childhood and Advisory Council. The program, known as QUALITYstarsNY, is a voluntary five-star rating system applicable to the full range of programs that serve children birth through kindergarten entry. Federal 2010 Race to the Top funding obtained by the State Department of Education provided funds for pilot implementation of the system in 450 programs from seven communities across the state.

The absence of a state investment in QUALITYstarsNY has also had a negative impact on our ability to obtain federal funding for early education. The importance of high-quality child care has continues to rise at the federal level, yet New York State remains behind its peers when it comes to investing in quality. The limited investment proved to be a disadvantage when the state applied for federal early childhood education funding through the 2011 Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge. The lack of state financial support for quality contributed to the state's failure to receive any of the \$100 million it was eligible for in both rounds of the Early Learning Challenge Grant competition. The importance of quality measures was also emphasized in the state's,

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell, F.A., Ramey, C.T., Pungello, E. Sparling, J. & Miller-Johnson, S. (2002). Early childhood education: young adult outcomes from the Abecedarian Project. *Applied Developmental Science*, 6(1): 42-57.

<sup>2</sup> Cohen, R. (2006). Early care and education as an economic development strategy: Taking a supply chain approach. Retrieved from Ohio Early Care & Education Campaign website: [http://www.groundworkohio.org/resources/policybrief\\_pdf/ECE%20as%20an%20Economic%20Development%20strategy.pdf](http://www.groundworkohio.org/resources/policybrief_pdf/ECE%20as%20an%20Economic%20Development%20strategy.pdf)



recently received, \$25 million pre-school expansion grant award, which requires programs to participate in QUALITYstarsNY as a condition of funding. However, without a strong state commitment to our quality improvement system, New York State may continue to miss out on federal funding for its early education initiatives or be unable to meet federal requirements for participation.

Although the pilot implementation of QUALITYstarsNY was non-representative in that it targeted communities with high numbers of children from families at high risk, it did provide a preliminary picture of the quality of existing programs in the state. On average the 450 programs evaluated received less than half the possible points indicative of quality care, with all programs failing to receive the top rating. Without investing in our stated commitment to “high quality”, our early child care and education system will continue to provide sub-par services to our children.

We are happy to see that Governor Cuomo has recognized the importance of quality early child care by including QUALITYstarsNY in this year’s executive budget. The \$3 million dollars designation by the Governor’s office will allow program currently participating in QUALITYstarsNY to continue engagement in quality improvement efforts. Additional funding could be used for the expansion of the program into more communities, to increase the incentives that promote program quality improvement, and for continued improvement of the QUALITYstarsNY system through the CCR&R network.

As the New York State government plans for the future, we hope it will support the continued development of a quality early childhood system. Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments to you.

