



Legislative Update on Children and Families 2018

from **Assemblywoman Ellen C. Jaffee**
Chair, Committee on Children and Families

SPRING 2018

Dear Friends,

My first year as Chair of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families was a busy one. I am humbled and grateful to Speaker Heastie for giving me the opportunity to serve communities across New York State in such a significant capacity. As an Assemblymember and Committee Chair I work every day, together with my colleagues, committee members, community leaders, advocates, and stakeholders to improve the lives of children and families across New York State. Their issues are community issues. In addition to my ongoing advocacy for quality public education, women's equality, environmental protection, job creation and affordable healthcare, my priorities include ensuring that every family has access to safe, high-quality, affordable child care, early childhood education, and the well-being of children and youth in foster and kinship care. I am committed to securing increased funding in the 2018-2019 Budget, and to ensuring communities have the resources, services and programs they need to support our most vulnerable children and youth, our caregivers and families, as well as those hard at work on the frontlines. To learn more about my work as Committee Chair visit my Assembly website.

Please let me know what is most important to you. The conversations we have are often the impetus for legislation I sponsor. I hope you take a few moments to share your thoughts and concerns. Your feedback is essential. To learn more about my work as Committee Chair visit my Assembly website.

Best wishes,

Ellen C. Jaffee
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The 2017-18 Enacted State Budget

Despite many cuts in the federal budget, in New York State we:

- Restored \$20 million for child care subsidies to expand access to child care for our high-need families;
- Fully restored \$27 million in discretionary Title XX funding that would have resulted in cuts to a variety of human services purposes including senior centers;
- Provided funding for community initiatives, including:
 - \$19.8 million for the Advantage Afterschool program in order to provide quality youth development opportunities to school-age children and youth for three hours directly after school;
 - \$15.6 million for Youth Development to support a variety of activities and services which promote positive youth development and prevent placement in the juvenile justice system;
 - \$9.98 million for the Facilitated Enrollment Child Care Demonstration program, which provides support to low-income families for child care assistance by expanding eligibility up to 275 percent of the Federal Poverty Level in demonstration areas;
 - \$3 million for Sexually Exploited Children (Safe Harbour) to serve youth who have been trafficked, sexually exploited, or are at risk of victimization;
 - \$2.45 million for Settlement Houses to provide community services including job training and employment programs, early childhood education, after-school youth programs, literacy education, legal counseling, mental health and home care, housing, and senior centers;
 - \$2.2 million for the Kinship/Caretaker Relative program, which provides support services to related caretakers who assume legal guardianship of children who were formerly their foster children;
- \$758,000 for the improvement of child protective services staff-to-client ratios;
- \$1.1 million to SUNY child care centers and \$902,000 to CUNY child care centers;
- \$4.5 million for the Foster Youth College Success Initiative program to help foster youth attend and succeed in college; and
- Expanded Hudson Valley United Way 2-1-1 Helpline to streamline referral services.



I spent a wonderful afternoon with kinship caregivers at the VCS Relatives As Parents Program (RAPP) support group, where we enjoyed lunch, discussed their concerns and the issues they face. If you are raising a relative's child, the RAPP support group meets at VCS on the third Friday of the month from 12:00 - 1:30 p.m.

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Learning More about Childcare Needs and Issues

“The child care crisis in New York State is one of the major obstacles to self-sufficiency and financial security for New York’s low-income working families and, in particular, working women. Indeed, research clearly indicates quality early learning and development programs, like roads and bridges, are part of the infrastructure of economic development and a stable, thriving community.”

Did You Know:

- Two-thirds of all families in New York State are headed by parents in the workforce and most work full-time by the time their children are three;
- The cost of child care in New York State is now the highest in the nation, averaging \$14,000 per child per year;
- Child care takes half the income of high-need working parents;
- 83% of low-income families in New York State who qualify for child care assistance don’t get it;
- According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, New York State ranks 41st in the nation on measures of children’s economic well-being, despite the fact that New York lags behind only one other state, California, in the number of residents whose net worth tops \$30 million;
- Access to child care reduces income inequality;
- Child care allows parents to work and go to school while boosting the economy;
- Child care centers and family child care homes account for 12,500 small businesses throughout the state;
- Every \$1 invested in early learning results in a \$1.86 reinvested locally; and
- For more information on child care and after school child care, I encourage you to visit these websites: NYSChildCare.org, headstartofrockland.org, <http://childcarerockland.org/>

New Law Establishes Child Care Availability Task Force

The Governor signed into law my bill (A.7726-A) sponsored in the Senate by Senator Tony Avella (D-Bayside), Chair of the Children and Families Committee, that will establish a Child Care Task Force to evaluate child care needs and the availability of affordable child care across New York State. The Task Force will examine issues including access to quality child care, child care cost, subsidized child care, the availability of non-traditional hours, as well as the impact of child care access on the workforce and economic development. Task Force members will be appointed by the Governor

and would include individuals recommended by the Speaker of the Assembly and the Temporary President of the Senate, as well as representatives of child care resource and referral agencies, child care providers and the business community. The Task Force would report its findings and recommendations to the Speaker of the Assembly and Temporary President of the Senate. This legislation is an important first step in developing a statewide strategy for significantly expanding access to quality, affordable child care for all children and families.



“Research suggests that safe, reliable child care is critical to a parent’s ability to maintain employment and self-sufficiency, while promoting positive child development. Despite this evidence, many working parents are unable to access affordable quality child care. Without child care, parents cannot pursue their education or remain in the workforce contributing to the economy and improving their quality of life.”

In May I held a joint public hearing with the Senate Committee on Children and Families and the Assembly Task Force on Women’s Issues to examine barriers to accessing quality child care and how lack of access relates to a variety of issues, including child development, family stability, and the economy. I also partnered with Assemblywoman Shelley Mayer (D-Yonkers), Chair of the Task

Force on Women’s Issues, to hold a series of roundtables throughout the state to learn more about child care needs and issues and to serve as a guide to developing child care policy. The roundtable discussions are a valuable opportunity to identify the obstacles that prevent families from accessing child care, as well as the challenges our providers and caregivers face.



Thanks to the Early Care and Learning Council for its **Excellence in Leadership Award**. I am honored to be recognized for my work around child care and early education - issues I am passionate about.



I hosted a Child Care Round Table discussion at Rockland Community College on the challenges and opportunities for expanding access to quality and affordable child care.

Welcoming the Adoption and Guardianship Assistance Program for Everyone (AGAPE) to Rockland County



In August I held a joint press conference with the Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition of New York (AFFCNY) to announce the opening of its new AGAPE office in Rockland County. Adoption, foster care, and kinship caregiving have increasingly become part of our everyday lives, woven into the fabric of our families and communities. Choosing to bring a child into a family changes that family's identity, how they perceive themselves and who they are. AGAPE helps post-adoptive and post-guardianship families through the unique challenges they face. The program offers services and programs free of charge, including parent trainings, support groups for both parents and youth, peer mentoring, navigation for cross-system needs, therapeutic services referrals and counseling. The new AGAPE office hours are Mondays and Tuesdays from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. More information and referral forms can be found at the AFFCNY Web site: www.affcny.org

Examining Supports for Foster Parents, Relative and Non-Relative Caregivers

In December the Committee on Children and Families held a public hearing in Albany to examine the impact of the 2017-2018 State Budget on supports for foster parents and caregivers of children removed from their homes. Caregivers of children removed from the home may be foster parents or non-foster parents, and relatives or non-relatives. Regardless of the situation, it is critical that these caregivers have adequate support to ensure the safety and well-being of the children they are caring for. This support comes in many forms, including foster care subsidies, as well as kinship programs and services such as counseling, respite and legal assistance.



I introduced a resolution memorializing Governor Cuomo to proclaim September 2018 as Kinship Care Month in recognition of the more than 150,000 children and youth in New York State who reside with kinship families, as well as the grandparents and other relatives who raise them, ensuring their safety, promoting their well-being, and establishing a stable household for these young people to thrive.



Third Annual Kinship Care Month Celebration

At the Third Annual Kinship Care Month Celebration Luncheon I was honored to be recognized as a Kinship Champion along with Senator Martin J. Golden, Vice Chair, Majority Conference, and Assemblywoman Shelley Mayer, Chair, Task Force on Women's Issues. Congratulations to the other honorees: Kinship Outstanding Organization: Jewish Board of Family and Children Services, Inc. – Kinship Care Program; Kinship Outstanding Caregiver: Leora Keith, Grandmother Caregiver, New York City; Kinship Outstanding Professional: Bill Ferris, AARP NY.

Raising the Wages for our Direct Care Workers

In June, I held a press conference in Albany urging the Governor and the Division of Budget to raise the wages of direct care individuals who are working in programs licensed by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), including Foster Care and Youth Facilities. We as a state have a moral responsibility to provide these children and youth the care and stability they deserve and that begins with investing in a qualified, direct care workforce that provides critical therapeutic care to these children, many who have been placed in our care as a result of abuse, neglect, and trauma. Dedicated OCFS individuals working each and every day with our most vulnerable children, youth and families should receive the living wage they deserve.



Roundtable: Ensuring Access to Mental Health Services for Children

It is crucial that families and children have access to the early treatment of mental health issues as well as the support services they need. The Assembly Committee on Children and Families and the Committee on Mental Health, Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther, Chair, held a roundtable to determine ways to improve access to children's mental health services for youth and their families statewide. According to the American Psychological Association 1 out of every 10 children or adolescents has a serious mental health

problem. If left untreated a mental health disorder can lead to suicide, substance abuse, inability to live independently, involvement with the correctional system, poor academic achievement, high unemployment, and physical health issues. We must take action to eliminate barriers to treatment, and ensure the continuity of mental health care by investing in our mental health professionals and the mental health workforce who provide these vital services.

NYS Assembly Standing Committee on Children and Families

The Assembly Standing Committee on Children and Families was established in 1975 as the Committee on Child Care with jurisdiction over legislation affecting child welfare, including foster care, preventive services, and adoption; child care; juvenile justice, including youth development and delinquency prevention

programs, Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS), and the detention and placement of adjudicated youth; adult protective services; residential and non-residential domestic violence services, and other services and programs for children and their families, including Family Court processes.



It's always a special pleasure to visit our wonderful early learning programs and spend time with the children. (Left to right) Head Start Nyack, Jawonio Preschool, West Street Childcare and Learning Center.

New York State Assembly • Albany, New York 12248



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*Chair, Committee on
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Paid Family Leave In Effect JANUARY 2018

Working families should never have to choose between caring for a newborn, an aging parent or a seriously ill loved one and a paycheck. When we put families' needs first, we are increasing fairness and keeping our priorities in order. The Paid Family Leave Law I co-sponsored provides New York's

working families with the most extensive leave benefits in the nation: 12 weeks of job-protecting leave funded through a minor employee contribution with no cost to our businesses - large or small. To learn more visit <https://www.ny.gov/programs/new-york-state-paid-family-leave>