



THE LEGISLATURE
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

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**New York State Legislators call on the State to Address
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Childhood Trauma
in the FY 2021-22 Final Enacted State Budget**

*****Press Release*****

ALBANY, NY - New York State legislators joined experts in childhood trauma and advocates on 3/18/2021 to urge New York State to include language in the final budget to address the dramatic increase in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Childhood Trauma experienced by hundreds of thousands of New York's children as a result of the shelter in place order New York State imposed as a response to COVID-19.

New York's shelter in place order - while necessary from a public health standpoint - has led to increased rates of domestic violence, child abuse, and other traumatic Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). In addition, 325,000 kids in New York reached or fell below the poverty line in 2020, and from March through July alone, 4,200 kids experienced the death of a caregiver.

The New York State Assembly included a proposal in its one-house budget resolution that will provide trauma informed services to children; educate the public about the individual and societal costs of ACEs and childhood trauma, the protective factors necessary to mitigate the effects of trauma, and the availability of services; and require all mandated reporters to be trained in ACEs and childhood trauma, implicit bias and detecting signs of abuse via telecommunication.

The legislators and advocates in attendance urged the Executive to include the language for this proposal in the final enacted state budget.

Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi, Chair, Assembly Committee on Children & Families

(D - District 28) said, "New York can give immediate relief to hundreds of thousands of kids who have been traumatized in the pandemic by including this measure in the budget. This would also put us on a path to begin to address many of the longstanding impacts trauma has on kids and all of society. We cannot miss this opportunity."

Senator Jamaal Bailey, Chair, Senate Committee on Codes (D - District 36) said,

“Childhood trauma affects our children in more ways than one could imagine. Sadly, trauma is rarely just a one time event, but instead something that manifests itself in a series of adverse childhood experiences. Additionally, COVID-19 has caused a further exacerbation of the trauma in the lives of our children. Our youth have been suffering severely throughout this pandemic. Whether via mental health concerns compounded due to social isolation or loss of loved ones, or physical health concerns such as domestic violence and child abuse, and a host of other ACEs, this pandemic has harmed our children and will continue to do so should we not intervene in a meaningful way. It is crucial that we provide the necessary funding to ensure that our children have the tools and services to address these issues- and pledge to help those that have experienced adverse childhood trauma. I am proud to sponsor this bill in the Senate and would like to thank Children and Families Chair, Assemblymember Andrew Hevesi for his leadership on this bill in the Assembly.“

Senator Roxanne J. Persaud, Chair, Senate Committee on Social Services Committee (D - District 19) said “There couldn’t be a more critical time to provide additional services and care for young New Yorkers. Social distancing helped slow the spread of COVID-19, but social isolation has compounded myriad existing difficulties young people face. Immediately addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences, including those brought on by the pandemic, paves a path for individual and family healing.”

Senator Samra Brouk (D - District 55) said, “New Yorkers were ordered to stay at home last March to protect ourselves and our communities from COVID-19, but for some in our state, home is an unsafe place. For children who experience abuse or neglect at home, the loss of school, sports, after-school activities, and access to friends and family members meant that they would be enduring unbearable trauma on top of the already enormous challenge of navigating COVID-19. Even as our population begins to access life-saving vaccines and get back to work and school, the mental health impacts of this pandemic will linger for many years to come. We must include dedicated language in the New York State budget to address the needs of children across the state who have experienced abuse and trauma during this difficult time, and have done so without access to their usual supportive services.”

Assemblymember Richard Gottfried, Chair, Committee on Health (D - District 75) said, “Children needed access to more mental health services before the COVID-19 pandemic, and they certainly need it now. Hundreds of thousands of children are facing increased poverty, trauma, and isolation, and all children deserve to receive the support they need regardless of what type of insurance they have.”

Assemblywoman Mathylde Frontus, a social worker and mental health clinician of over 20 years (D - District 46), said, “The importance of ensuring children’s mental health cannot be understated as the effects of the COVID-19 continue to adversely impact the most vulnerable communities. Children affected by this public health crisis require the support and resources included in the Assembly One House so they are not defined by a legacy of loss.”

Assemblymember Didi Barrett, Chair, Legislative Women’s Caucus (D - District 106) said, “We are only just beginning to understand the mental, emotional and behavioral health trauma that this pandemic has inflicted on our children and families. I stand with my colleagues in advocating that the final New York State budget expand services covered by the Child Health Plus Program to ensure that every child has access to the support and assistance they need.”

Assemblymember Karines Reyes (D - District 87) said, "The shelter in place orders that were intended to keep us safe have unintentionally placed many children in potentially traumatic environments. Adverse Childhood Experiences can cause chronic health and mental health problems that last into adulthood. There has been a significant increase in Adverse Childhood Experiences in New York and the Legislature must address this critical issue in the final budget proposal."

Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright (D - District 76) said, "I join with my colleagues in the Assembly to stand up to address Adverse Childhood Experiences and childhood trauma in the FYI 2021-22. A staggering 35% of adults with children in their household report the emotional or behavioral health of at least one child has been negatively affected by the pandemic. School closures, separation from friends, and disruption to routines are almost guaranteed to adversely impact the emotional and behavioral health among children. It is critical in the wake of mass deaths and transformation of all American lives, that we immediately and expeditiously stand up for our most vulnerable populations."

Tim Hathaway, Executive Director, Prevent Child Abuse NY, said, “Most children have an amazing capacity for change and adaptation. But what happens when everything changes and disruption is the new normal? Along with all of the challenges visited on children relating to heightened levels of stress, strained peer and family relations, isolation, disrupted learning and development we can add, for many families, increased exposure to mental health, abuse and domestic violence issues. We can't sit back and let the consequences unfold for families and kids - stepping in and stepping up to reinforce the systems that support kids and the communities they live in now is critical. Building a workforce that is knowledgeable about Adverse Childhood Experiences and how to build resilience through the Protective Factors framework is central to moving our states mandated reporter systems forward.”

David Wallace, LCSW-R, Executive Director, LaSalle School, said, "The COVID pandemic has cast a bright light on the truth of ACEs. Children without access to the resources that promote resilience: loving relationships, consistent education, and safety, suffer. This truth is all

the more evident for children of minority and other marginalized communities. The time is now to build back stronger and in keeping with over two decades of science. We know what kids and families need, systems that work together to promote success for all."

Vincent J. Palusci, MD, MS, FAAP, NYU School of Medicine, said, "Pediatricians and other health care providers work hard to take care of children by doing medical visits, developmental screenings, immunizations and parent counseling. We are now learning how important Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Protective Factors are for adolescent and adult health and we want to work with everyone in the community to identify them and to reduce their negative effects. We need everyone to be on our team to promote the health and safety of everyone in our society."

Deborah Faust, Director of Family Engagement & Support Services, Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc. (MHANYS), said, "In the words of Dr. Robert Anda-ACEs are the leading determinant of the health and social well-being of our nation."

Matthew Shapiro, Associate Director, Public Affairs, NAMI-NYS, said, "There has never been a more crucial time to address children's mental health and expand pediatric psychiatric services. The events of the past year have been traumatic on us all, but these stressors impact children to a greater degree, especially when coupled with a lack of access to friends and school-based support programs. It is well known the long-lasting effects of adverse childhood experiences have on an individual's physical and mental health and if New York fails to properly address children's mental health today, we will be dealing with waves of this pandemic for decades to come. NAMI-NYS applauds the Assembly for including \$10 million for homeless students, including funding for trauma informed practices in schools, and \$10 million to support mental health in schools. We are grateful for Assembly Children and Families Chair, Andrew Hevesi for leading the fight for this funding and for our future."

Jessica Klos Shapiro, Director of Policy and Community Education, ECLC, said, "The Early Care & Learning Council and its network of CCR&Rs, through the Infant Toddler Mental Health Consultation Initiative, work directly with child care providers to deepen their understanding of ACEs and Protective Factors. Our efforts are preparing the child care workforce to understand how trauma impacts the development of children in the youngest years and teaches skills and strategies for coping and problem solving. Through the training and support of the provider community we seek to ensure that the resources needed to mitigate challenges and create resiliency are accessible not just at times at crisis, but as a foundation for strong communities. This is especially important as the state heals from the events of the last year. The proposed funding and initiatives by the NYS Assembly and Children and Families Chairman Hevesi will go a long way to help ensure that the struggles of all children, and particularly those that are continually impacted by racial bias, are addressed."

Amy Scheel-Jones, Senior Consultant, Practice Transformation, Coordinated Care Services, Inc., said, "Knowledge is power and sharing knowledge creates shared power. The science of childhood adversity, trauma, and resilience can activate parents and caregivers to promote protective factors while lowering risk factors in ways that promote the health and well-being of all children/youth. Equipping all mandated reporters with resources and effective

communication strategies to engage with parents and caregivers in these critical areas is a strength-based strategy that can have meaningful impact on children’s well-being now and in the adults they become.”

Kate Breslin, President & CEO, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, said, “The science of human development is screaming at us. Childhood adversity, when it is severe, persistent, and unmitigated, can lead to behavioral problems, learning difficulties, and physical health issues, including chronic diseases like asthma and heart disease. Intervening early and providing children and their families with support they need is a critical step to prevent harm to children’s brains and bodies caused by toxic stress. Preventive services, like the kinds provided to prevent entry into child welfare, help families provide an environment where children can thrive. With more families than ever under extraordinary stress, the Executive proposal to cut funding for preventive services, and reduce the percentage the State contributes to cover the cost of these services makes no sense. To help New York families recover from this terrible year intact and together, we urge the Senate and Governor to follow the Assembly’s lead and fully fund preventive services in the final 2021-2022 NYS Budget.”

Kathleen Brady-Stepien, President and CEO, Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA), said, “Knowledge of ACEs, and the science of child and adolescent brain development, are game changers in shaping our ability to support children and families. We know that children have been through so much change throughout this pandemic—adapting to remote schooling, being away from their friends and loved ones, and in many cases their families have been under stress and strain. We also know that our children and youth are incredibly resilient. We must invest in a strong prevention services continuum in New York State, including primary prevention and prevention services, by rejecting the Governor’s proposed cuts to these critical services. Educating and sharing the framework of ACEs, and the importance of Protective Factors, has the power to change mandated reporters’ approach to sensitive situations involving our children and youth. We applaud Assembly Member Hevesi and the NYS Assembly for their strong leadership on protecting important funding for our NYS families and for promoting ACEs training.”

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