

MORE NYS CHILDREN STAND TO LOSE CHILD CARE

Published by lohud.com on April 7, 2017

Over 20 years ago, we started hearing evidence that early experiences shape the very architecture of the young child's brain with lifelong impacts. Other research found that early childhood trauma was linked to poor adult health outcomes while high quality early learning programs lowered the incidence of obesity, hypertension, and heart disease in adults. The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis got into the act, asserting that high quality child care could mitigate the negative effects of poverty on young children by preparing children to do better in school. James Heckman, a Nobel laureate in economics, became so convinced of the singular impact of quality early learning, that he testified before Congress that it was the best way to close our skills gap and ultimately our budget deficit. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Committee for Economic Development and Mission Readiness, a group of retired military leaders, all issued papers and/or statements calling for greater public funding.

If you concluded that this growing body of scientific evidence and support has been enough to rocket early learning to the top of everyone's priority list for funding, you would be mistaken. Nationally, fewer children receive child care subsidies than at any time since 1998. The picture in New York is similarly grim. Eighty-three percent (83%) of families eligible for child care assistance are NOT receiving subsidies.

In his budget, Governor Cuomo proposed no new child care funding. His plan to fund it in part with \$27M from Title XX, which supports services for seniors and domestic violence, has been rejected. Title XX is apparently fully restored now, which is a good thing, but this has left child care with a \$27M hole – into which 3,500 children will fall when they lose their child care subsidies.

To appreciate how badly we are doing on child care, understand that we are fighting to get back to even at a time when we will really need an increase of \$150M to make child care safer and higher quality and available to more children. Everyone purports to want lower taxes, higher graduation rates, more skilled workers. But we keep failing to invest properly in something that would actually help us get there. There can be no cuts to child care this year, and a serious investment in child care must be a top priority for next year.

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