

News from Assembly Members Amy Paulin, Michaelle Solages, and Ken Zebrowski

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\***

## **Assembly Members, School Officials, Advocates Rally for Fully Funding Universal Full-Day Pre-K Statewide**

**Albany, NY** – Over 30 Assembly Members from across the State, joined by school officials and advocates, rallied in Albany to support full funding for universal full-day pre-K in the State budget.

### *NYS' SUFDPK Funding Program*

Since 2014, NYC has received \$300M annually under the Statewide Universal Full-Day Pre-K (SUFDPK) program. The SUFDPK program, which allocates \$10,000 per child, has allowed NYC to offer universal pre-K to all children. As a result, if you live in NYC, whether you are rich or poor, your child can go to pre-K for free just as they can with public school.

Districts outside of NYC however, which enroll more than half of the public students in the State, are only allocated \$40M in annual funding under the SUFDPK program, and for FY 2022 an additional \$15M in available grants, which similarly gives \$10,000 per child for full day pre-K, was provided. This allotment is largely insufficient to provide pre-K for the vast majority of districts in NYS, and the lack of funding for these schools has resulted in the majority of the districts being unable to operate pre-K programs. These schools also ended up having to apply and compete for the SUFDPK funds, and the majority do not receive funding. The inequity between schools in New York City and districts outside of the city needs to be remedied.

### *NYS' "UPK" Funding Program*

Districts outside of New York City, can also receive funding from the state for universal pre-K, from a pool that is simply called state "UPK" funding. Prior to 2021, out of the total of \$515 million in UPK funds, approximately \$250 million was allocated to districts outside of New York City. Although \$90M was added in last year's budget, the amount needed for districts outside of New York City is still wholly insufficient. The formula for receiving these funds is based on property values, which for Westchester and Rockland only generates \$2700/child for a ½ day program and \$5400/child for a full day program. \$5400/child is not enough for

Westchester, Rockland, Long Island, and most counties in New York State, to provide full-day pre-K services.

### *Benefits of Pre-K*

High-quality pre-K has significant benefits for children as it provides them with valuable skills to succeed in school and beyond. Studies show that children who arrive at kindergarten prepared to learn perform better throughout school and complete more years of education.

Research shows that brain development in the years prior to kindergarten builds “school readiness” which is the foundation for success in school, at work, and throughout life. Pre-K aids in giving children the four key dimensions of school readiness -- language and literacy, thinking skills, self-control and self-confidence. When these four foundations are strong, a child is ready to thrive in kindergarten and beyond.

Public pre-K also enables parents of young children to return to the workforce. A study of Washington DC’s universal pre-K program shows that it has resulted in more mothers in the workforce, helping women, families, and the economy.

“School superintendents and children’s advocates from across the state have made it clear they are willing to create new Pre-K programs or expand their existing half-day Pre-K programs, but simply lack the funding. The time has come for the state to deliver on the promise of truly universal Pre-K by providing adequate state funding for all of New York’s children,” **said Assembly Member Amy Paulin.**

“Long Island is the lowest-funded region for pre-k in New York State. Only 10% of 4-year olds on Long Island have access to a fully-funded pre-k program. Families across our state are experiencing immense stress due to COVID-19 which is why it is more important than ever to fully-fund pre-K at \$10,000 per child in New York State,” **said Assembly Member Michaele Solages.**

“The benefits of universal full-day pre-K are well documented, and it is critical that the state fully funds these programs across the state. Last year’s additional funding was a step forward, however far too many children were still unable to access full-day programs. We urge Gov. Hochul and the legislative leaders to make this funding a priority and include it in this year’s budget,” **said Assembly Member Ken Zebrowski.**

“The Statewide Universal Full-Day Pre-K (SUFDPK) program is not just an issue of education and childcare, but an issue of equity as well. The families in all regions of this state should have the same opportunity to enroll their children in the SUFDPK program. Children who attend pre-K are better prepared for kindergarten and have improved academic outcomes. This funding is essential for the future of our children,” **said Assemblymember Harry Bronson.**

“Pre-K provides our kids with a nurturing environment to build a meaningful foundation for their future K-12 education. We must secure this funding so that all students, regardless of where they live, have equal access to this program,” **said Assemblymember Fred W. Thiele, Jr.**

School officials and advocates joined the rally in support.

“Full pre kindergarten funding for all school districts across New York is a fundamental question of equity,” **said City School District of Albany Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams.** “Our school district has offered full-day pre-K programs since 1990 because we believe in the critical value of robust early childhood opportunities for our students and families. However, more than half of our pre-K seats continue to be funded at the outdated half-day UPK rate, which requires us to redirect about \$1 million annually from our general fund to bridge the gap. We are grateful to Assembly member Paulin, and to our local Assembly representatives Pat Fahy and John McDonald, for their strong advocacy on behalf of all of our state’s youngest learners.”

“Assemblywoman Paulin continues to be a champion for all of New York’s children, including our youngest New Yorkers. While we lead the effort to provide Pre-K opportunities to our children throughout the state in 2014, the time has come to reinvest in our commitment and increase the resources available to ensure that every Pre-K aged child, no matter their zip code, has access to high quality Pre-K opportunities. By investing in our youngest, we know that we will continue to create a solid educational foundation that will support the future of our great state. Let’s appropriately increase the funding allotment now, so that all PreK aged children can start PreK in September on the right foot,” **said Joseph L. Ricca, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools, White Plains Public Schools.**

“We know that universal pre-kindergarten is one of the best ways to provide a firm educational foundation for our children. Having additional resources to continue to provide a quality program to our district’s youngest scholars will go a long way to assure their success as they develop into life-long learners,” **said Raymond Sanchez, Superintendent, Ossining Union Free School District.**

“We all know the facts: preschool attendance has been shown to improve children’s academic and socio-emotional skills, preparing them for kindergarten and beyond. We also know that quality preschool programs benefit children from disadvantaged families the most, providing those children with a safe and nurturing environment for healthy development. Greater funding for additional UPK slots would only build on New York’s progress and its important place in leading the nation on the equitable delivery of high-quality Universal Pre-K programs,” **said Kris Felicello, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools, North Rockland Central School District.**

“By providing a UPK program, we not only support the child, we support the family. Every day we see incredible growth in these children as they develop skills in the classroom. Their ability to communicate and work with others is remarkable. Full funding for UPK must be supported; there is no better investment in the future of education,” **said Cynthia Delfino, President/CEO · YMCA of Central & Northern Westchester.**

“The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy has been working for 150 years to advance policies that enable all New Yorkers – particularly low-income families and children – to thrive,” said Dede Hill, Policy Director for the Schuyler Center. “The policies we champion are those proven to prevent hardship and trauma; to keep families together, strong, and economically stable; and to remove the barriers created by racism and economic inequality. Universal pre-K is one of those policies. This is the year for New York to fully fund pre-K in all New York communities,” **said Dede Hill, Director of Policy, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy.**

“Fully funding the Statewide Universal Full-Day Pre-K program is a key component of the strong, stable, affordable and equitable early care and education system that New York needs to build without delay. Most parents simply cannot afford to pay what quality early childhood education costs, with devastating and long-term consequences. A robust investment in this program brings new opportunities to parents and their children that will benefit us all,” **said Kathleen Halas, Executive Director, Child Care Council of Westchester, Inc.**

"Child Care Resources of Rockland has been calling for fully funded, truly Universal pre-K for all four-year-olds in New York State for years. The decision last year to fund over 14,000 pre-K seats statewide was a welcome and much needed next step. However, over 50,000 pre-K seats remain unfilled, and the funding is based on decades-old formulas. In Rockland County, where the vast majority of pre-K seats are located in community-based child care programs, several will opt out of offering pre-K seats for the 2022-2023 school year because current funding - approximately \$5400 per year per child for a 5-hour day - is no longer sustainable for their business. Child Care Resources of Rockland strongly urges NYS Legislative leaders and Governor Hochul to prioritize and fully fund pre-K for all children in New York State,” **said Vicki Caramante, Executive Director, Child Care Resources of Rockland, Inc.**

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