



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dutchess County Coalition Leaders Back Governor Hochul Child Care Plan, Seek Pilot Status and Immediate Funding for Interim Child Care Needs

Dutchess County Early Learning Coalition warns that families and providers are struggling due to exhaustion of child care subsidy funds and urgently need assistance

Poughkeepsie, N.Y., Jan. 8, 2026– Today, Governor Kathy Hochul, joined by New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, announced a plan to establish free universal child care throughout New York State. This plan will create truly universal pre-K outside of New York City, establish pilot communities to model universal child care and, in the interim, increase funding for the existing Child Care Assistance Program by \$1.2 billion. These steps will provide an on-ramp to a universal child care system that ensures that all New York families have access to safe, convenient and high-quality care for their children. As members of the Dutchess County Early Learning Coalition, the Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet, the Dutchess County Workforce Investment Board (DCWIB) and the Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam applaud Governor Hochul on the initiatives and recommend Dutchess County as an ideal location to pilot the program.

Since 2024, Dutchess stakeholders in the workforce development, business, government, nonprofit, higher education and child care sectors have come together through the Early Learning Coalition to work towards a county-wide universal child care system. The Coalition is committed to making Dutchess County the best place to raise a family in New York State by ensuring universal access to high-quality child care for all children, strengthening and growing the early childhood educator workforce and ensuring a thriving wage for child care providers.

"Dutchess County employers benefit when their employees do not have to worry about whether their children are safe and cared for while they are at work," said Louise McLoughlin, Executive Director of the DCWIB. "Universal child care will allow more parents—particularly mothers—to enter the workforce and will provide local businesses with relief from workforce shortages."

Ensuring that all parents have access to high-quality child care is a common sense, bipartisan issue that supports working parents, strengthens local economies and increases kindergarten readiness.

"Universal child care benefits children from cradle to career," said Jill Gomez, Executive Director of the Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet. "Universal child care will allow all children, regardless of family income or background, to start elementary school ready to learn. Attending a high-quality early childhood program between ages zero to four ensures that children enter kindergarten with both the social-emotional and hard skills to succeed academically."

While the Coalition welcomes the addition of \$1.2 billion in funding for the Child Care Assistance Program that will be included in the 2027 budget, it is critical that bridge funds be made immediately available. In recognition of the high cost of care and its importance to workforce sustainability, Governor Hochul expanded subsidies to cover more middle-income families. However, the current New York State budget lacked sufficient funds to meet the expanded eligibility that these policy changes enabled, creating an unfunded mandate that has put the child care sector at risk. As of today, more than half of the state's counties have run out of funds for child care



assistance. Dutchess County is in a better position than many, as the county has sufficient funding to provide subsidies to currently certified families through the end of the fiscal year (Aug. 31, 2026). However, the county was forced to close the program to new families who are unable to afford the full cost of child care.

"Dutchess County's child care providers are committed to providing the best care possible to local children, but they have been struggling to keep their doors open due to the lack of subsidy funding available to new families," said Himali Pandya, Executive Director of the Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam. "Providers and families cannot wait until the 2027 state budget is enacted in April and need relief now."

The Coalition calls on Governor Hochul to select Dutchess as one of the five initial pilot communities under her universal child care plan. Dutchess has the infrastructure, bipartisan political support and most of all, the drive and commitment to bring universal child care to the county. However, the Coalition also urges Governor Hochul to provide immediate emergency funds for the Child Care Assistance Program to ensure that all families can access child care and to stabilize providers who serve the county's neediest families.

To learn more about the Dutchess County Workforce Investment Board's work to foster a skilled and competitive workforce, visit dcwib.org or on socials at [Facebook](#).

To learn more about the Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet's cradle to career initiatives, visit PKChildren.org or on socials at [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

To learn more about the services The Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam provides to families and child care providers, visit childcare.dutchess.org or on socials at [Facebook](#).

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About the Dutchess County Workforce Investment Board

The Dutchess County Workforce Investment Board partners with businesses, educational institutions, and community organizations to develop a skilled workforce that meets the evolving needs of Dutchess County employers. DCWIB supports job seekers through career services, training opportunities, and connections to local employment, while also helping businesses address workforce challenges and access talent development resources. The DCWIB's board is made up of more than 50 percent business leaders, helping ensure workforce initiatives reflect the needs of the local business community.

About Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet

The Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet was launched in February 2020 as a coordinated effort among City of Poughkeepsie leaders and youth services providers to develop a citywide cradle-to-career agenda and system of opportunities. The Cabinet's Leadership Council is co-chaired by City of Poughkeepsie Mayor Yvonne Flowers and Mr. Gregory Mott, Superintendent of the Poughkeepsie City School District. The Leadership Council is composed of representatives from across sectors, including nonprofits, local government schools, higher education, faith-based organizations, philanthropy, business and healthcare.

About the Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam, Inc.



The Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam supports families and child care providers throughout the region by offering referral services, professional development training, quality improvement initiatives and advocacy for accessible, affordable child care. The council works to strengthen the early childhood education system and ensure all children have access to high-quality care and learning environments.

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