

November 19, 2021

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

We write to respectfully urge you to sign and enact the Child Poverty Reduction Act, S.2755C/A.1160C. Signing this legislation would serve as a declaration from you and New York's leaders of your intent to cut child poverty in half in ten years, while advancing racial equity. The Child Poverty Reduction Act provides New York the tools needed to reduce child poverty. It makes a public commitment to cutting child poverty in half in ten years; requires an annual public report of the effects of budget proposals on child poverty and regular reporting on progress; and establishes the Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council to develop a plan to achieve the goal.

For too long, New York has allowed hundreds of thousands of children to endure the hardships of poverty – in times of recession, and in times of plenty. New York entered the pandemic with more than 700,000 children living in poverty, representing 18% of all New York children, with that percentage a full 10 points higher for Black children, and 7 for Latino children. COVID-19 brought hundreds of thousands more children into poverty or near-poverty. Racial inequities have widened and been laid bare. By March 2021, 31% of New York adults reported it had been somewhat or very difficult to pay for usual household expenses and 24% reported not being current on rent or mortgage, with eviction or foreclosure in the next two months likely.

It is not surprising then, that the bill swept through the Legislature with near-unanimous support from upstate and downstate, rural, urban, and suburban legislators and constituents, as well as having bipartisan co-sponsorship. As New York mounts its recovery from the pandemic, this legislation will ensure that our children are centered in that recovery. Signing this legislation will signal to New York and the nation that your administration will prioritize the health and well-being of all New York children.

The Child Poverty Reduction Act positions New York to build on recent important wins for New York children, including the state minimum wage increase, and the recently released Child Care Availability Task Force plan focused on dramatically expanding access to affordable, quality child care. These are important springboards for progress, but not enough to ensure we achieve a significant – and lasting – reduction in child poverty in New York. Compared to the rest of the nation, New York children are more likely to live in poverty than children in 32 other states.

This year, New York has real support from the federal government to turn the tide on child poverty, via the American Rescue Plan Act, arguably the most consequential investment in the nation's children in a generation. Yet the American Rescue Plan will not lift all New York children out of poverty. It leaves out tens of thousands of immigrant children, and it is temporary.

For our children experiencing poverty, every day that we fail to prioritize ending child poverty puts them more at risk for immediate and long-term hardship. The experience of poverty and trauma in childhood can have long-lasting impacts on development. The toxic stress of poverty can alter the brain development of young children – causing permanent changes in the structure and functioning of the brain. As a result, many children who experience poverty face significant challenges – in the form of poor health, academic obstacles, and lower earnings – for the rest of their lives. With the stakes so high, there should be no delay in tackling child poverty in every inch of our great state.

We urge you to sign the Child Poverty Reduction Act into law and create the conditions for New York to meaningfully turn the tide of child poverty once and for all.

Sincerely,

Abbott House
 Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition of New York
 Alliance for Quality Education
 APSAC-NY
 Astor Services for Children & Families
 Bivona Child Advocacy Center
 Children's Aid
 Children's Defense Fund-New York
 Children's Rights
 Citizens' Committee for Children
 COFCCA
 Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)
 Community Health Care Association of New York State
 Community Service Society of New York
 Early Care & Learning Council
 ECE ON THE MOVE LLC
 Foodlink, Inc.
 Good Shepherd Services
 Graham Windham
 Hunger Solutions New York
 Ibero American Action League, Inc.
 League of Women Voters of St. Lawrence County
 Little Flower Children and Family Services of New York
 Mothers & Babies Perinatal Network of SCNY, Inc.
 New York Immigration Coalition
 New York State Children's Alliance, Inc.
 New York State Community Action Association
 New York State Council of Churches
 New York State Public Health Association

Northern Rivers
NYS American Academy of Pediatrics, Chapters 1, 2 & 3
NYS Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services
NYS Network for Youth Success, Inc.
Open Buffalo
Poppy Muse Inc.
Prevent Child Abuse NY
Rise
Rising Ground, Inc.
Robin Hood
Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative (RMAPI)
Rural Health Network of SCNY
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
Strong Children Wellness
The Children's Agenda
The Education Trust-New York
The Jewish Board of Family & Children's Services
The New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
The New York State CASA Association, Inc.
United Way of Buffalo and Erie County
United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes
United Way of The Greater Capital Region
United Way of Westchester and Putnam
Westchester Children's Association
WNY Women's Foundation
WRI (Welfare Research, Inc.)
YWCA's of NYS

cc: Senate Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie
Senator Jessica Ramos
Assemblymember Harry Bronson