

Who's Minding the Kids?

Meeting Challenges and Creating Opportunities for Quality Child Care and Early Learning in Suffolk County

A Report to the Suffolk County Legislature
by the Welfare to Work Commission

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COUNTY OF SUFFOLK
WELFARE TO WORK COMMISSION
of the Suffolk County Legislature

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Executive Summary

President Barack Obama's call in his 2013 State of the Union message for a preschool educational initiative stimulated an already vibrant national discussion about what America is doing to care for and educate children prior to their entering kindergarten or 1st grade. This discussion heated up during 2014 in New York State as both Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio called for a publicly-funded Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) program for four year olds. Child care and early learning are now receiving an extraordinary amount of media and public attention driven in large part by the growing need Americans have for these services as more and more families have both mother and father in the workforce.

Amid this national conversation, the commission voted to conduct public hearings and focus groups in late fall of 2013 titled, "Who's Minding the Kids? Meeting Challenges and Creating Opportunities for Quality Child Care and Early Learning in Suffolk County." The core conclusion resulting from the commission's research is: *While the benefits of quality child care and early learning for children ages birth to five are indisputable, adequate funding for quality programs has significantly lagged behind the rhetoric to create these programs.*

During the preschool years, from birth to age five, 85% of a child's brain development occurs. Yet, 95% of American public education dollars are spent on children over the age of five. Numerous, respected and validated research studies have documented, over time, that children who receive *quality* preschool experiences are less likely to require special-education services, less likely to become juvenile delinquents, more likely to graduate from high school, have jobs, families and homes in adulthood. The research has demonstrated that children in poor and working-poor families especially benefit from quality programs. Other studies have demonstrated that every dollar invested in child care and early learning can stimulate the local economy from \$7 to \$19 depending on the variables used to calculate the economic multiplier.

Despite the proven benefits of quality child care and early learning, funding has not met the needs for such programs. In 2012, U.S. expenditures on child care fell to a 10-year low. As this report was being finalized, Suffolk County learned in May of 2014 that its state 2014-2015 Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) which funds child care for poor families was being increased by only \$580,725 or 1.9% to \$31,364,169 despite an estimated need for \$40 million to meet the demand for child-care assistance for poor families in Suffolk County. Because of inadequate state funding, families as of July 1, 2014, qualify for the CCBG child-care subsidy if they earn under 165% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) which is only \$38,858 for a family of four in 2014. The commission has concluded that the CCBG funding shortfalls are the result of a flawed formula used by the state Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to calculate Suffolk's allocation.

While this report was being drafted, a study was released that found Long Island to be the sixth most expensive place to live in the United States. As this commission concluded in its 2012 report on Suffolk poverty, the “true” definition of poverty on Long Island is actually 200% of the federal definition, or \$47,700 for a family of four. Reducing the eligibility for a child-care subsidy to families earning 165% of the FPL eliminates thousands of children from working-poor families. The struggles of working-poor and immigrant families to find quality, affordable child care are formidable, as are the struggles of families with preschool children who have special developmental or physical needs, all of which are documented in this report.

Long Island’s high cost of living has driven mothers into the workforce and thereby dramatically increased the demand for child care and early learning. There are 226,000 children under the age of five on Long Island, with an estimated 133,000 working parents; yet, there are only about 62,000 spaces in licensed child-care centers, family-child home providers and UPK programs, that is, spaces for only 46% of Long Island’s children under five whose parents work.

In addition, parents with two children using licensed child care might pay \$27,282 a year for those services, accounting for 16% of the average household income. New York State recommends that families pay no more than 10% of their household incomes for child care which is the threshold for affordability. One study revealed that *76% of Long Island families who need child care cannot afford to have their children in a licensed child-care program* and half cannot afford legally-exempt care (informal care by friends or neighbors) because it would account for more than 10% of their household incomes. The result is that many Suffolk parents are forced to place their children in lower-cost, lower-quality programs and sometimes in illegal, potentially-dangerous programs.

Each of the longitudinal studies that demonstrated the benefits of early learning was predicated on a quality program. Throughout this report, quality programs are predicated on adequate public funding. In the growing search for quality, public-school educational standards are being applied to preschool programs. But the funding challenges for attaining quality are enormous. For example, preschool teachers in licensed centers are increasingly being asked to implement validated educational curricula similar to the demands made on public school teachers. Yet, the typical preschool teacher in New York earns only \$27,000 a year compared with the typical public school teacher who earns \$72,000 a year. Again and again throughout this report, one fundamental question is asked: Who will pay, and how much, for quality programs?

New York State has stringent health and safety regulations for licensed and registered child care programs. But the commission found a need for improvement in state oversight of the educational quality of these programs. This report identifies validated curricula that can be utilized in quality programs. In addition, the state has initiated a QUALITYstarsNY program that would ensure quality educational standards for early-learning and child-care programs, but again, *public funding has been insufficient to implement this program*. Additionally, the

elusive search for quality has been exacerbated by multiple government funding streams (e.g., Head Start, UPK, CCBG) that have created competing and disconnected programmatic silos which prevent the creation of a coordinated child-care and early-learning system in Suffolk County and on Long Island.

In the end, this report concludes that President Obama's ringing call for the nation to do what we know works for preschool children has fallen short. *Absent adequate government funding for child care and early learning similar to that provided by other industrial democracies, affluent American parents can afford quality programs while middle-class and poor parents are largely shut out of quality programs.*

Within this frustrating milieu of soaring rhetoric, positive empirical research and inadequate government funding, the commission has concluded that *there are limited responses that Suffolk County Government can introduce to meet the challenges and create opportunities for quality child-care and early-learning programs.* Among the commission's recommendations that could be implemented in 2014 to reduce these barriers are:

- Create a Suffolk County Child Care and Early Learning Commission that will be charged with: creating a data repository on the status of child care and early learning; pilot testing a school district "shared services" model; coordinating child care with the county's economic-development plans; recommending evidence-based curricula; improving the early diagnosis and intervention strategies for preschool children with special needs; educating the public about the importance of quality programs.
- Continue to advocate with OCFS for a change in the CCBG formula that underfunds Suffolk's demand for child-care for poor families.
- Allocate county funds, as has been done in the past, for child care with emphasis on incrementally expanding the number of children in working-poor families who can receive the child-care subsidy
- Use a company's support for child care as a criterion for awarding Suffolk Industrial Development Agency (IDA) grants and tax abatements.
- Establish a Suffolk County Children's Trust Fund, through which individuals and corporations would be awarded a tax incentive for contributing to this fund that will address some of the unmet needs of preschool children, such as expanding the eligibility for the child-care subsidy for working-poor families.

The commission is hopeful that New York State will move toward an adequately funded, truly "universal" pre-K program for all four-year-old children within five years. In the meantime, the commission is concerned that many Suffolk children from birth to age five do not have access to quality child-care and early-learning programs. These recommendations are offered with the sincere belief that affordable, incremental action can be taken now by Suffolk County to address the barriers that cause too many Suffolk children, as President Obama's stated the challenge, "to start the race of life already behind."

Introduction

Quality Preschool Education and Child Care: A “Critically Important Window of Opportunity”

A Teachable and Opportune Moment

In his 2013 State of the Union Address, President Barack Obama said: “In states that make it a priority to educate our youngest children...studies show students grow up more likely to read and do math at grade level, graduate high school, hold a job, form more stable families of their own. We know this works. So let’s do what works and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind.”

Elaborating on the president’s remarks, the White House early-learning website states that:

“Expanding access to high quality early-childhood education is among the smartest investments that we can make. Research has shown that the early years in a child’s life—when the human brain is forming—represent a critically important window of opportunity to develop a child’s full potential and shape key academic, social, and cognitive skills that determine a child’s success in school and in life.”¹

The White House website further notes:

“Participation in high-quality early-learning programs—like Head Start, public and private pre-K, and child care—will provide children from all backgrounds with a strong start and a foundation for school success. These programs also generate a significant return on investment for society; numerous economic studies have documented a rate of return of \$7 or more on each dollar invested through a reduced need for spending on other services, such as remedial education, grade repetition, and special education, as well as increased productivity and earnings for these children as adults.”²

The importance of early-childhood learning was clearly demonstrated in the 2005 HighScope Perry Preschool Study, “Lifetime Effects: The HighScope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40.” This study—perhaps the most well known of all HighScope research efforts—examines the lives of 123 children born in poverty and at high risk of failing in school. From 1962–1967, at ages three and four, the subjects were randomly divided into a program group that received a high-quality preschool program based on HighScope’s participatory learning approach and a comparison group who received no preschool program. In the study’s most recent phase, 97% of the study participants still living were interviewed at age 40. Additional data were gathered from the subjects’ school, social services, and arrest records. The study found that adults at age 40 who had the preschool

¹ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education/early-childhood>

² Ibid.

program had higher earnings, were more likely to hold a job, had committed fewer crimes, and were more likely to have graduated from high school than adults who did not have preschool.³

Since the President's 2013 State of the Union, a national conversation has begun around the importance of early learning—nowhere with greater intensity than in New York State, where both Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio have proposed Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) programs. Seeing this as a teachable moment, the Welfare to Work Commission held focus groups and public hearings in the late fall of 2013 to ascertain how Suffolk County can meet both the challenges and opportunities of providing quality early-learning and child-care experiences that will give young children, from birth through age five, a strong start in the long educational road ahead of them along with a strong start to a life of self-sufficiency and success.

Goals of the Public Hearings

Beginning in August of 2013, the commission's Child Care Committee assembled a dozen Long Island child-care experts who met regularly throughout the late summer and fall to plan the hearings and focus groups. The commission's eleven November focus groups and two public hearings (December 2nd and 18th) provided a platform for working families, child-care providers, academicians and government officials to:

1. Tell the stories of how working families earning between 100% (\$23,550 for a family of four) and 400 % of the FPL (\$94,200) struggle to afford child care for their preschool children.
2. Define modalities of quality child-care services in Suffolk County.
3. Document the importance and impacts of quality early-childhood learning experiences for all children, especially the children of working-poor families.
4. Document the need for quality child care in Suffolk County.
5. Review the contributions of quality child care and early learning to the health and future development of the Suffolk County economy.
6. Analyze the potential impacts on Suffolk County of President Obama's Early-Childhood Learning Agenda, including:
 - Providing quality preschool opportunities for every child;
 - Growing the supply of effective early-learning opportunities for children.
7. Assess the impact of State child-care policies, including:
 - The New York State Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) and the formula used to award the grant;
 - Universal Pre-K
8. Propose policy recommendation to the Suffolk County Legislature to enhance the coordination, availability and quality of child care and early leaning.

³ <http://www.highscope.org/content.asp?contentid=219>

In all, eight hours of testimony from 26 academic experts, child-care specialists, government officials and members of the public were received during the two December public hearings. In addition, over 55 parents and child-care providers participated in the eleven November focus groups held at five locations: Rainbow Chimes Child Care and Early Learning Center in Greenlawn; Head Start in Amityville; CSEA in Commack; HabiTots Preschool and Child Care Center in Medford; Family Service League's North Fork Early Learning Center in Laurel. In addition, 126 parents responded to a child-care questionnaire created by the Child Care Committee that was distributed on line or as a hard copy by their child-care provider. A complete list of those who provided formal testimony or who participated in the focus groups can be found In Appendix A. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix E.

What follows are the commission's findings and recommendations, based on the hearings, focus groups and parent survey.



Part I

Challenges: The Need for Quality Child Care and Early Learning in Suffolk— Giving Young Children a Strong Start

“The benefits of quality child care are so well documented that if it were a serum, it would be a required inoculation.” Dina Lieser, MD

It Begins at Birth: The Critical Importance of Early Learning

When the commission held a debriefing about the child-care hearings at its January 2014 meeting, one member spoke for just about all the Commission members when he said that prior to the hearings he did not know that 85% of a child’s brain development occurs before the age of five. Nor did most Commission members know that 90% of American public education dollars are spent on children over age five.

The importance of early learning was summarized by the first keynote speaker at the December 2 hearing, Dr. Dana Friedman, president of the Early Years Institute in Plainview:

- “The first five years lay the foundation in childhood and beyond for cognitive functioning; behavioral, social, and self-regulatory capacities; and physical health.
- Yet many children face various stressors during these years that can impair their healthy development. Early-childhood intervention programs are designed to mitigate the factors that place children at risk of poor outcomes. What’s most important to recognize is that the benefits accrue only when the programs are high quality.
- When children have the proper supports and stimulation in high-quality programs, they are less likely to need special education, remediation or grade repetition which significantly reduces school costs.
- These high-quality experiences also lead to long-term benefits for the children since the research shows they are less likely to become juvenile delinquents and more likely to graduate high school, have jobs, families and homes into adulthood— compared to children who did not have these experiences.
- We also know from economic research, led by Nobel Laureate James Heckman, that all of society benefits from quality early-childhood education, with a \$7 return on investment for every \$1 invested.
- The local economy benefits with goods purchased by programs, taxes and wages paid to caregivers and support that enables parents to attend work and produce income for their families.
- So we know how much money we save if we provide quality early care and education, how much we lose if we don’t, and how much early childhood contributes to the local economy.

- We also know exactly what we need to do to stimulate early learning and maximize a child’s potential.”⁴

Another witness, Professor Elizabeth Palley, an early-learning specialist at the Adelphi University School of Social Work, also testified that research studies have demonstrated that “high-quality early learning can help increase childhood IQ, improve school performance, reduce the likelihood that a child needs special education or reduce the intensity of the special education services that are needed, help increase high school graduation rates, reduce both juvenile and adult incarceration rates, and reduce the likelihood that the child will end up on public assistance as an adult.”⁵

The critical importance of early learning was driven home by Dina Lieser, MD, co-director of Docs for Tots, who testified on December 2:

“Babies’ brains make 700 neuronal connections per second. This period of rapid brain development is unparalleled. The irony of [America’s] education investment curve so skewed toward the later years [ages 6-18; grades K-12] represents a huge mismatch between investment and opportunity. This mismatch has serious impact on the school, health and life success of all children.”⁶

Dr. Lieser, a pediatrician, elaborated on the importance of early learning:

“Disparities in language development emerge at very young ages... By the age of 18 months, differences in the size of children’s vocabulary first appear, based on whether they were born into a family with high education and income or low education and income. By age three, children with college-educated parents or primary caregivers had vocabularies two to three times larger than those whose parents had not completed high school.”⁷

These assessments that early intervention compensates for class differences in parenting were corroborated by several studies reported in *The New York Times*, which “heightened the policy debate” about the need for preschool education, especially for poor children:

“Nearly two decades ago, a landmark study found that by age three, the children of wealthier professionals have heard words millions more times than those of less educated parents, giving them a distinct advantage in school and suggesting the

⁴ Friedman, Dana, EdD, president of the Early Years. Testimony at the December 2 Welfare to Work Commission early learning and child care hearing.

⁵ Palley, Elizabeth, PhD, professor, Adelphi University School of Social Work. Testimony at the December 2 Welfare to Work Commission early learning and child care hearing Institute.

⁶ Lieser, Dina, MD, FAAP, co-director, Docs for Tots. Testimony at the December 2 Welfare to Work Commission early learning and child care hearing.

⁷ Ibid.

need for increased investment in prekindergarten programs. Now a follow-up study has found the language gap as early as 18 months....The new findings...reinforced the earlier research showing that because professional parents speak much more to their children, the children hear 30 million more words by age three than children from low-income households.⁸

These assessments were echoed by Jennifer Marino Rojas, vice president for grants and operations at the Rauch Foundation. Citing a Harvard University study,⁹ she said:

“There is...significant scientific research that has proven that positive early-childhood experiences are necessary to create a strong foundation for sound health and sturdy brain architecture, which are essential to learning, positive behavior and physical well-being. These foundational skills allow children to build on their learning into adulthood. But this learning does not start at age four or five—it starts at birth.”¹⁰

Changing Demographics, Economic Realities and the Demand for Child Care

While research has demonstrated the benefits of early learning and quality child care, Americans remain conflicted about placing young children in child-care settings outside the home. Janet Walerstein, executive director of the Child Care Council of Suffolk and the second keynote speaker at the commission’s opening hearing on December 2, observed that “many government officials—especially at the federal level—see child care as a private parent issue, not a public responsibility. They have the outdated view that mom should stay at home to care for the children while dad goes to work. The belief persists that you are a ‘bad parent’ if your child is in day care...There is a ‘tsk, tsk’ factor at play.”¹¹

While such opinions still influence many decision-makers who shape government policies on child care, they contradict economic realities. As Professor Palley testified, U.S. Census data and research studies have shown that “61% of women with children under three are in the paid labor force. Further, most children who are not yet school-aged spend at least 31 hours in care with someone other than their parents.”¹²

Additionally, a 2013 Pew Research Center study found that:

⁸ Rich, Motoko. *Language Gap Study Bolsters a Push for Pre-K*, *New York Times*, October 22, 2013.

⁹ Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University. *The Foundations of Lifelong Health are Built in Early Childhood*. July, 2010.

¹⁰ Marino Rojas, Jennifer, vice president, grants and operations, Rauch Foundation. Testimony at the December 18 Welfare to Work Commission early learning and child care hearing.

¹¹ Walerstein, Janet, executive director, Child Care Council of Suffolk. Testimony at the December 2 Welfare to Work Commission early learning and child care hearing.

¹² Palley, Op. cit.

“A record 40% of all households with children under the age of 18 include mothers who are either the sole or primary source of income for the family. The share was just 11% in 1960. These ‘breadwinner moms’ are made up of two very different groups: 5.1 million (37%) are married mothers who have a higher income than their husbands, and 8.6 million (63%) are single mothers.”¹³

While reflecting the persistence of some traditional views about mothers and childrearing, as well as the difficulties faced by working mothers, the 2013 Pew study cited above also found that:

“About three-quarters of adults (74%) say the increasing number of women working for pay has made it harder for parents to raise children, and half say that it has made marriages harder to succeed. At the same time, two-thirds say it has made it easier for families to live comfortably. While the vast majority of Americans (79%) reject the idea that women should return to their traditional roles, the new Pew research survey [referenced above] finds that the public still sees mothers and fathers in a different light when it comes to evaluating the best work-family balance for children. About half (51%) of survey respondents say that children are better off if a mother is home and doesn’t hold a job, while just 8% say the same about a father.”¹⁴

Professor Palley viewed these data in a positive light, noting that “only half (51%) [of Americans polled] believe that children are better off if their mothers stay at home and 79% reject the idea that women should return to their more traditional roles as stay-at-home mothers,” thereby demonstrating that American attitudes and values have “changed in the past 40 years about who should provide child care.”¹⁵ Nevertheless, a 2014 Pew Research Center study found that “the rising cost of child care is among the likely reasons for a rise in the number of women staying at home full time with their children,” especially poor women, up from 23% in 2000 to 29% in 2012.¹⁶

As American attitudes about child care outside the home are changing but still conflicted, the need for both parents to work is undisputed for many, if not most, Long Island families. Nationally, four in 10 American households with children under age 18 now include a mother who is either the sole or primary earner for her family, according to the Pew Research Center analysis of census and 2013 polling data cited above. This figure has quadrupled since 1960.¹⁷ The Welfare to Work Commission’s 2012 study, “Struggling in Suburbia: Meeting the Challenges of Poverty in Suffolk County,” reported on the burden

¹³ Wange, Wendy, Kim Parker and Paul Taylor. “Breadwinner Moms: Mothers Are the Sole or Primary Provider in Four-in-Ten Households; Public Conflicted About the Growing Trend.” Pew Research Center, May 29, 2013, p. 2.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁵ Palley, Op. cit.

¹⁶ Italie, Leanne. “Stay at Home Moms on the Rise in U.S.,” *Newsday*, April 9, 2014.

¹⁷ Wang, Wendy and Kim Parker and Paul Taylor, Op. cit.

Long Island's high cost of living places on families, which explains why so many families need both parents working.

For example, Pearl Kamer, then the chief economist of the Long Island Association, testified to the commission in 2012 that, for a family of four, an annual income of \$75,000 is needed to cover basic necessities on Long Island. Dr. Kamer's \$75,000 was lower than the \$86,245 offered by Professor Diana Pearce, whose "Self Sufficiency Standard for New York State 2010" calculated the actual Suffolk County costs of housing, child care, food, transportation and other basic expenses for a family of four (two adults, a preschool and school-age child) less various credits, such as the Child Tax Credit. The Pearce study examined the costs for ten different family structures (adult and infant or adult and preschooler, etc.) and found the Suffolk range of basic incomes to be from \$36,522 (single adult) to \$115,665 (adult, infant, preschooler and teenager,) depending on the size of the family.¹⁸

Long Island's high cost of living is clearly the main reason so many families need two incomes to make ends meet. In the commission's 2012 poverty study, Dr. Kamer reported:

"409,063 Long Island households had incomes below \$75,000. Applying the average household size in Nassau and Suffolk, 537,973 Nassau residents and 662,411 Suffolk residents—a total of 1.2 million—lived in households with incomes below \$75,000. Thus, the base line to make ends meet in Suffolk County is at least \$75,000 for a family of four, even more depending on the makeup of the family, such as the presence of preschool children whose expensive pre-K child-care costs need to be factored into the budget."¹⁹

A *Newsday* editorial on March 6, 2014, pointed out what most Long Islanders already know: "If you live in the metropolitan area, you're probably shelling out insane amounts of money for the basics," it said, noting that, according to a *Forbes* magazine report, Long Island ranks "as the sixth most overpriced place in the nation."²⁰ Long Island's exceptionally high housing, transportation, child-care and even food costs drive mothers into the workforce. This is an economic reality for Long Island. It is the commission's belief that some, if not most, of the uncertainties parents face when both work derive from their difficulties finding and affording safe, reliable, quality child care, especially for their preschool children.

¹⁸ Welfare to Work Commission of the Suffolk County Legislature. *Struggling in Suburbia: Meeting the Challenges of Poverty in Suffolk County*, 2012, p. 9

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10

²⁰ *Newsday* editorial, "A Dubious Distinction for High-Cost Long Island," March 6, 2014.



The Disconnect Between Child-Care Slots and Demand on Long Island

While Suffolk’s economic realities create an enormous demand for child care, that demand is met unevenly and with great cost to working parents. According to the Rauch Foundation, “There are 102,000 children age 5 and younger in Suffolk County.... Since 2008, the median income for Suffolk families has continued to decrease, while at the same time the cost of center-based child care increased by more than 10%... [with the] average cost of licensed child care [ranging] from \$10,000 to \$15,000—or more—a year for one child.”²¹ Thus, a family with two children in child care might have to pay \$30,000 a year, which is higher than the \$22,700 annual tuition, with room and board, it costs to attend a SUNY college or university. Eric Mayer, a middle-class Huntington resident who participated in one of the eleven focus groups the commission conducted, commented that child care carries a “tremendous cost” for his family where he and his wife work. In addition to using the child-care center, they hire a part-time nanny to help care for the children while they work.²²

As part of its data gathering for this report, the commission surveyed 126 parents regarding their child-care needs. Here are several typical comments made by the working parents surveyed which support the critical need for child care:

²¹ Marino Rojas, Op. cit.

²² Mayer, Eric. Statements at the child care focus group, Rainbow Chimes Early Education Center, Huntington, November 18, 2013.

- “Child care helps my family by giving me peace of mind that my child is safe and learning while I make a living.”
- “It makes it possible for me to work full time, which is necessary living on Long Island, and since I work for a nonprofit and my husband is a school teacher, neither of us makes enough to support the family alone.”
- “It provides peace of mind and allows us both to work—which we must do.”²³

Despite the demand for child care, Angela Zimmerman, coordinator of Family Support Long Island at Molloy College, testified that there are “226,000 children under the age of five on Long Island, with an estimated 133,000 working parents.” Yet, if you add up the number of spaces in licensed child-care centers, family-child home providers, nursery schools and UPK programs, “there are only about 62,000 child-care slots on Long Island.”²⁴ Dr. Friedman added that there are thus child-care “spaces for only 46%” of Long Island’s children under five whose parents work.” Dr. Friedman further testified:

“Parents with two children using licensed child care might pay \$27,282 a year for those services, accounting for 16% of the average household income. For those using legally-exempt care [child care that does not require a New York State license or registration and is typically done in a provider's home or the children's home,] the annual cost of child care for two children could amount to \$16,952, or 10% of family income, on average. *New York State recommends that families pay no more than 10% of their household incomes for child care.* This figure has been used as the threshold for affordability. Our analysis reveals that 76% of Long Island families that need child care cannot afford to have their children in a licensed child-care program and half cannot afford legally-exempt care because it would account for more than 10% of their household incomes.”²⁵

Paradoxically, as the commission reported to the Suffolk Legislature in 2012, there were 986 child-care providers in Suffolk County at that time, of which 69 providers or 7% had closed, some because they had lost profitability.²⁶ The child-care industry is quite competitive, with some providers reporting vacancy rates that the commission believes can be attributed to the high cost of licensed child care on Long Island.

Jennifer Marino Rojas spoke personally when she testified that “affordable, reliable and high-quality child care is essential to the stability of working families. It allows us to work without excessive worry about the well-being of our children.”²⁷ And yet, the commission’s

²³ Friedman, Dana. *Summary of Suffolk County Child Care Survey*, Welfare to Work Commission, January, 2014.

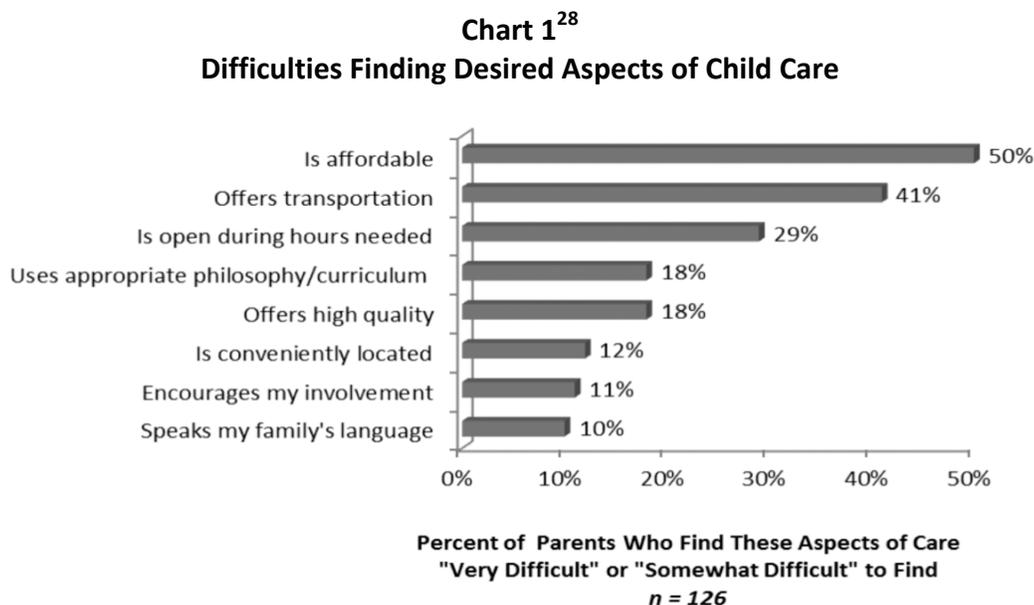
²⁴ Zimmerman, Angela, coordinator of Family Support Long Island at Molloy College. Testimony at the December 18 Welfare to Work Commission early learning and child care hearing.

²⁵ Friedman, December 2 hearing testimony, Op. cit.

²⁶ Welfare to Work Commission. *The Negative Impacts of State Reductions in Child Care Funding on the Long Island Economy*. Report to the Suffolk County Legislature, October, 2012.

²⁷ Marino Rojas, Op. cit.

survey of parents revealed that almost half the parents had difficulty finding affordable child care. As Chart 1 reveals, in the commission’s parent survey, affordability was the major challenge among several that parents reported in their quest for the child care that is “essential” to their family’s stability.



Thus, while significant numbers of Suffolk families need both mother and father working in order to make ends meet, and while child care is critical for both parents to work, the child-care industry has not been able to meet the demand for “affordable, reliable and high-quality child care.”

Full-Day Kindergarten and UPK – Another Disconnect

Publicly-funded full-day kindergarten as well as Universal Pre-K programs would provide welcome relief for parents burdened by expensive, private child-care costs. But both programs have fallen short in New York State. The state does not mandate kindergarten programs, although New York City does have mandated full-day kindergarten. With the 2% spending and tax cap imposed on public school districts by Albany in 2011, the commission found that some districts have chosen half-day kindergarten in order to remain within the 2% cap. For example, the commission learned that four prestigious districts in the relatively affluent Town of Huntington—Harborfields, Huntington, Elwood and Northport—do not provide full-day kindergarten. The Huntington School Board voted on April 7, 2014, to restore full-day kindergarten,²⁹ which the voters approved when they adopted the budget on May 20, 2014.

²⁸ Friedman, *Summary of Suffolk County Child Care Survey*, Op. cit.

²⁹ Hildebrand, John. “Longer ‘K’ for More LI Districts,” *Newsday*, April 8, 2014.

Jennifer Casey, an attorney who represents the Town of Huntington on the Suffolk County Planning Commission and served on a Huntington School District parent-planning committee, testified that of Long Island's 118 elementary school districts, "10 districts [in 2013] have half-day kindergarten." She went on: "My fear is that if kindergarten is not made mandatory, more districts will shorten their programs to half day or eliminate the programs altogether." The result is that in districts with half-day kindergarten, working parents must pay for half-day child care or, as Ms. Casey stated, make the difficult and expensive decision to enroll their child in private school with full-day kindergarten.³⁰

Richard Iannuzzi, at that time the president of New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) testified at the December 2 hearing:

"New York State does not mandate kindergarten programs. Yet we know that one out of three children in New York State starts kindergarten already behind in basic skills...Full-day [kindergarten] programs are at risk due to the budget pressures that districts are under...[resulting from] the property tax cap...The importance of kindergarten has never been greater."³¹

While New York's kindergarten programs are straining, *New York Times* columnist Gail Collins wrote on January 13, 2014, "All of a sudden, early-childhood education is really, really popular."³² Collins devoted this column to the surge in interest for funding Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) programs, in New York City, New York State and elsewhere in the nation. Universal Pre-K was established in New York State in 1997. Universal Pre-Kindergarten is a New York State early-childhood initiative focused on preparing four-year-olds for kindergarten with four hours of publicly-funded early learning. According to the State Education Department:

"The ultimate goal of the New York State Prekindergarten [program] is to ensure that all children have rich and varied early-learning experiences that prepare them for success in school and lay the foundation for college and career readiness. A preschool program that reflects these standards of high quality developmentally appropriate instruction provides all children, including children with disabilities, students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), and English Language Learners (ELLs) with an important foundation that promotes the acquisition of skills in the five domains of development: approaches to learning; physical development and health; social and emotional development; communication, language, and literacy (including approaches to communication and English Language Arts and literacy); and cognition and knowledge of the world (including mathematics, science, social

³⁰ Casey, Jennifer. Testimony at the December 2 Welfare to Work Commission early learning and child care hearing.

³¹ Iannuzzi, Richard, president, NYSUT. Testimony at the December 2 Welfare to Work Commission early learning and child care hearing.

³² Collins, Gail. *How Preschool Got Hot*, *The New York Times*, January 29, 2014.

studies, the arts and technology.) Providers awarded UPK contracts with the [New York State Department of Education] may not charge families for services covered under these contracts.”³³

The problem with New York State’s current UPK program is that many school districts have not accepted the funding for the program. Dr. Friedman described the problem with New York State’s current UPK program:

“Why do only 60 of [118] Long Island elementary school districts [i.e., districts that have elementary and secondary schools as opposed to the six districts that have only secondary schools] offer pre-K? In 2006, after Long Island school districts returned to the State more than \$11 million of the \$36 million allocated for pre-K, [the Early Years Institute] conducted research to understand why. From the districts without pre-K, we learned that many didn’t offer pre-K, because they didn’t have space and didn’t know who could provide it in the community. From the districts with pre-K, we learned that although they were satisfied with their Community Based Organization (CBO) partners, even ranking them a ‘9’ on a 10-point scale of satisfaction, they still thought of the programs as ‘babysitting’.”³⁴

Dr. Friedman noted that “districts have long complained that the per-child allocation for pre-K from the state does not cover the cost of quality or of other critical services, such as transportation or social services. With most districts offering only half-day pre-K programs, many parents cannot take advantage of pre-K due to their work schedules and the cost of paying for [wraparound] care during the rest of the work day.”³⁵

Transportation is a major impediment causing school districts not to opt into UPK as well as an onerous burden for working parents in general who place their children in a child-care or early-learning setting. Transportation to and from child care is usually the responsibility of the parent. Some group or family-day care providers will transport children to and from their program under a prearranged agreement with the parent. Head Start no longer offers transportation, due to the expense associated with providing it. As Chart 1 above demonstrated, of the 126 parents who responded to the commission’s child-care survey for this report, a significant 41% found it difficult to find a child-care provider that offers transportation. This was the second most frequent complaint the surveyed parents had about obtaining child care.

Public school districts that offer transportation to and from child-care centers will transport any school-age child to the destination the parent authorizes, on a regular basis, *if it is within their school district boundaries*. Some districts will only transport within the

³³ <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/DCP/Vendor/FormsPreKVendors/default.htm>

³⁴ Friedman, December 2 hearing testimony, Op. cit.

³⁵ Friedman, Dana. Email to Welfare to Work chair Richard Koubek, April 14, 2014.

elementary school boundary. Child-care centers that are located just outside a district boundary report that it becomes a frustrating endeavor for a family to secure a quality before- or after-school program that matches their working hours, especially when there are younger siblings involved. Kathleen Roche, director of the Rainbow Chimes Child Care and Early Learning Center in Greenlawn, summarized the frustration arising from the lack of transportation for wraparound care:

“It would be extremely beneficial for children if the state were to enact legislation that would enable school district busses to cross district lines (say, within a few miles) to bring children to/from a nearby after-school or kindergarten/pre-K wraparound program. Years ago, Assemblyman James Conte and Senators Carl Marcellino and John Flanagan attempted to do this, but there wasn't enough support to move it out of the Ways and Means Committee. Here's an example of what this might mean for families (especially Department of Social Services [DSS] subsidized families): Our program is located at the exact border of three school districts and less than a mile from a fourth district. Only the district that our facility is actually inside the borders of will transport children to us...The district that is literally across the street will not transport School Aged Child Care (SACC) needs children to us, or even to a 'bus stop' across the street where we could wait for the children. The officials cited NYS law, which apparently forbids crossing district borders to transport children. So in this one area of Suffolk alone, there are children in need of after-school care who cannot access our available, close-by, and subsidy-accepted slots.”³⁶

Some child-care centers will provide busing to and from a local elementary school if the enrollment is sufficient to make this transportation economically viable. Among some of the transportation expenses incurred by providers are: a mini bus, a driver with an appropriate clean license, and a Plan B (in case the bus breaks down or the driver calls in sick, etc.) One center uses the services of an airport limousine/taxi/van to transport the out-of-district boundary children that live local to their center. Transportation is not a covered expense under pre-K, and rarely is there a public-school district with a pre-K program that provides it.³⁷

Thus, working parents of a child in a half-day UPK or kindergarten program need to find their own mode of transportation to get their child to wraparound care in a child-care center for the remainder of the day. For working parents, this can be a grueling responsibility.

Another factor besides transportation causing districts not to opt for UPK funds, according to Richard Iannuzzi, the then-president of NYSUT, is “the fear that UPK funds will go away, and then the district will have to pay the costs.” UPK is thus hardly “universal” in New York

³⁶ Roche, Kathleen. Email to the Child Care Committee of the Welfare to Work Commission, May 4, 2014.

³⁷ Liguori, Kathy. Email to Welfare to Work chair Richard Koubek, May 6, 2014.

State. The commission believes that the UPK proposals by New York State Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, which will be examined below, might offer the promise of creating a truly “universal” prekindergarten program for the State. Unfortunately, for many working parents, UPK currently remains a much needed but unrealized alternative to expensive out-of-pocket child-care costs. As one parent summed up this difficult situation in the parent-survey comments:

“Due to the cost of child care, we cannot afford a [child-care center with]...the structure and learning that a center offers. I have a four-year-old who is also in the UPK program for our district [four hours a day], but it is a struggle to pay the tuition for...wraparound care [for full-day care.] We are sacrificing because we know how important it is, but it is a huge struggle, and there is no way we could afford two children in day care.”³⁸

The Child-Care Needs of Working-Poor and Immigrant Families

If finding affordable, quality child care is a struggle for middle-class families, how much more so must it be for working-poor families? The commission’s 2012 report on Suffolk poverty, *Struggling in Suburbia*, provided a special focus on working-poor people. The report noted that, according to the U.S. Census, almost 178,000 Suffolk residents make up the working poor, having incomes between 100% and 200% of Federal Poverty Level or FPL (i.e., between \$ 23,850 and \$47,700 for a family of four in 2014) which is too high an income to receive many government supports, such as subsidized child care or food stamps, but far too low to be self-sufficient in Long Island’s high-cost economy, where, as noted above, \$75,000 is the base line to make ends meet.³⁹

Professor Katherine Newman and a team of researchers from Princeton University conducted a seven-year study of the working or near poor, whom they called “The Missing Class.” Their study provides a moving portrait of working-poor people:

“Their grit and determination are extraordinary...Near-poor Americans do work, usually in jobs the rest of us do not want—jobs with stagnant wages, no retirement funds, and inadequate health insurance, if they have it at all. While their wages stay the same, the cost of everything goes up...Their incomes, households, and neighborhoods lack the solidity of an earlier generation’s blue-collar, union-sheltered way of life. Missing Class families earn less money, have few savings to cushion themselves, and send their kids to schools that are underfunded and crowded...”⁴⁰

Professor Newman captured the stress that working-families endure on a regular basis:

³⁸ Friedman, *Summary of Suffolk County Child Care Survey*, Op. cit.

³⁹ *Struggling in Suburbia*, Op. cit., p. 13.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

“Near-poor parents are firmly attached to the world of work...They pay their taxes and struggle to keep afloat....Yet even as these men and women dutifully turn the wheels of the national economy, their devotion to work takes a toll on their family life, especially on their children, who spend long hours in substandard day care or raise themselves in their teen years.”⁴¹

Very often these families, earning too much to qualify for government supportive services such as food stamps yet not earning enough to pay their bills, have to make “Sophie’s choices” each month, such as, “Do we feed the kids or pay the child-care provider?” The Island Harvest, Long Island Cares 2010 study of hunger on Long Island, for example, found that, of the 280,000 people who used food pantries or soup kitchens:

- 47% had to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities/heat.
- 49% had to choose between paying for food and paying their rent or mortgage.
- 36% had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care.⁴²

That study did not explicitly measure child care as one of these Sophie’s choices, but given the burden of child-care costs, coupled with the critical importance of child care for working-poor families, it is reasonable to assume that many working-poor families have to scrimp each month to pay their child-care provider. For them, food pantries can be a lifeline.

Reflecting on the stress caused by high child-care costs, Keesha Bailey, who earns \$33,072 a year, told her Greenlawn focus group: “We parents who earn less money care for our kids as much as those parents who earn more money.”⁴³ For working-poor people like Ms. Bailey, government programs such as the child-care subsidy or full-day kindergarten or UPK or Head Start enable them to continue working. As one parent commented in the survey, “Without Head Start I could not afford day care or a regular pre-K program and even a babysitter. It would not pay for me to go to work only to pay for my child-care expenses.”⁴⁴

In addition to the special stressors working-poor families encounter in paying for child care, according to Professors Daniel Willingham and David Grissmer of the University of Virginia, finding a quality program takes on special urgency when researchers have determined that a good child-care program “could be a means to get poor kids ready to learn reading and math; they are currently eight to ten months behind wealthy kids when they start

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Bailey, Keesha. Statements at the child care focus group, Rainbow Chimes Early Education Center, Huntington, November 18, 2013.

⁴⁴ Friedman, *Summary of Suffolk County Child Care Survey*, Op. cit.

kindergarten.”⁴⁵ The impact of government cuts to programs to help working-poor families afford or receive quality child care will be analyzed later in this report.

Immigrants are an important part of the Long Island economy. According to a 2012 Fiscal Policy Institute study, funded by the Hagedorn Foundation, immigrants make up 16% of the Long Island population and account for 17% of total economic output. The report found that immigrants are considerably more likely than native-born Long Islanders to be of prime working age (16-64) and “immigrants tend to have more working adults per family. A significant number of immigrants are working poor. Twenty-eight percent of immigrant families on Long Island have three or more working adults, compared to 17% of U.S.-born families.”⁴⁶ Child care is thus an important need for immigrant working families, although securing it presents even more challenges than it does for U.S.-born families. As Chart 1 above showed, 10% of the families surveyed for this report had difficulty finding a child-care setting where people speak the family’s language or languages.

Child Care and Preschool Education for Special-Needs Children

Identifying Developmental Milestones: Special-needs preschool children with developmental delays, physical or intellectual disabilities present unique challenges to their families and child-care providers. Carolyn Gammerman, director of the Long Island Early Childhood Direction Centers, testified on December 18 that some parents “don’t always know the developmental milestones that preschool children need to reach.” For parents with special-needs children, identifying these milestones is critical and their special-education providers play an important role in helping parents learn about them. The Direction Center collaborates with the Child Care Council of Suffolk to provide professional development workshops to child-care providers about typical development, including children with special needs, in their programs. One parent stated the problem during a November 19 focus group: “Sometimes these [child-care] programs are the only way that we, as parents, can find out if our child is developmentally on track...because often we can’t determine this at home.”⁴⁷

Ms. Gammerman added that when the signs of developmental delays emerge, parents are sometimes reluctant to refer their child for an evaluation. Some parents worry about what this means for their child in terms of “labeling,” possible stigma and long-term outcome. Ms. Gammerman expressed the need for education in the community at large so that “all parents feel it’s OK to receive services.” She explained that preschool special education focuses on serving preschool students with a disability (PSDs) in the “least restrictive environment,” meaning with other students who do not have disabilities, to the maximum extent appropriate

⁴⁵ Willingham, David. T. and David W. Grissmer. “How to Get More Early Bloomers,” *The New York Times*, January 30, 2014.

⁴⁶ Fiscal Policy Institute, *New Americans on Long Island: A Vital Sixth of the Economy*. 2012, p. 4-5.

⁴⁷ Notes of the November 19 focus group, Amityville Head Start.

to the needs of the PSD student. She stated that “parents may need reassurance to overcome their reluctance and embrace who their child is and seek appropriate services.”⁴⁸

Suffolk County Early-Intervention Program: The Suffolk County Division of Services for Children with Special Needs (DSCSN) is a division within the Department of Health Services. The DSCSN incorporates three separate programs for children with special needs:

1. The Early Intervention Program (EIP) is for children birth to three years of age with developmental delays;
2. The Preschool Special Education Program is for children three to five years old with disabilities. (Eligibility for both of these programs is established by New York State eligibility criteria);
3. The Children with Special Health Care Needs Program (incorporating the Physically Handicapped Children’s Program) serves clients birth to 21 years of age with special health-care needs.

Early Intervention is a comprehensive program designed to improve the development of infants and toddlers (birth to age 3) with developmental delays, and minimize potential delay among children seriously at risk. The program offers assistance to families in meeting their children’s special needs. Suffolk County Early Intervention official designees oversee eligibility criteria and the development of appropriate service plans for eligible children. Early Intervention services are most effective when provided in the child’s natural environment, and the EIP emphasizes active family involvement. The division ensures that families and children receive appropriate services and referrals to community resources to enhance child development.

Over 90% of children in the Early Intervention Program receive services in their home, the child’s natural environment. Speech and language services are the most common service authorized. The county is reimbursed 49% of the cost for services not covered by Medicaid or commercial insurance. The EIP relies on reliable evaluation procedures to identify children on the autism spectrum and provides comprehensive services to diagnosed children. Over 4,000 children a year are referred to the program. About 1,600 children are currently receiving services. The EIP is responsible for developing transition services, to community resources for children no longer eligible to receive Early Intervention services, and for children who will continue in a preschool program.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Gammerman, Carolyn, director, Early Childhood Direction Center. Testimony at the December 18 Welfare to Work Commission early learning and child care hearing.

⁴⁹ Heintz, George, coordinator of preschool services, Suffolk County Department of Health Services. Telephone interview with Welfare to Work Commission chair Richard Koubek and vice chair Kathy Liguori, March 24, 2014.

Parents with concerns about a developmental delay may request an evaluation. There is no out-of-pocket cost for evaluations for either the Early Intervention Program or the Preschool Program.⁵⁰

The New York State Department of Health and the New York State Department of Education have established the following criteria for children eligible to receive services:

- Children who have a 33% delay in one area of development (the developmental areas are: physical, communication, cognition, social emotional and adaptive;)
- Children who have a 25% delay in two developmental areas; or
- Children who have a diagnosed condition that leads to a developmental and/or educational delay.⁵¹

Suffolk’s Preschool Special Education Program: George Heintz, the preschool coordinator for the Suffolk County Division of Services for Children with Special Needs, described preschool services. Children are evaluated by providers under contract with the county. Suffolk County’s 71 school districts’ Committees on Preschool Special Education (CPSEs) determine eligibility and services for children aged three to five years old. If a child is determined to be a “preschooler with a disability,” based upon an evaluation that finds the child meets New York State eligibility criteria, the CPSE determines the level of appropriate services to meet the child’s needs. The school district does not contribute to the cost of services, but the CPSE determines: the classification of children, type of services, frequency and duration of services, the provider and location of services. The state and the county share costs of the program at approximately 60%/40%.⁵²

Members of the CPSE include: Early Intervention service coordinators and providers for children transitioning from EIP services; representatives from the school district; the preschool evaluator; the parent and anyone else the parent wishes to have attend the meeting; and Suffolk County representatives. Suffolk County representatives, under contract with the Division of Services for Children with Special Needs, and staff representing early intervention attend CPSE meetings in an effort to ensure appropriate services for preschool children with disabilities in the “least restrictive environments.” The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates placements in the least restrictive environment, in an effort to keep children with disabilities in an environment that is as close as possible to the environment where typical children can be found.⁵³

CPSE placements may include one of the 23 community center-based programs in Suffolk County for children with special needs. Center-based programs offer services in self-contained

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

classes for more severely impaired children or in integrated settings where children with disabilities are included in classrooms with typically developing peers. Class size is also dependent on the child's special needs. The services of a Special Education Itinerant Teacher (SEIT) and/or related services therapists may also be authorized by the CPSE. SEIT and related services can be provided either in the child's home, at a provider's office, or at a typical child-care site. SEIT services must be provided at least two times a week. Children on the autism spectrum receive more SEIT hours because of their exceptional needs. Recently, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo signed legislation to change the payment methodology for SEIT services. Starting in 2015, SEIT services will be on a fee-for-service basis. Currently, these services have been paid for as a program with a tuition rate, which has resulted in many services being paid for but not actually provided to special-needs children and their families.⁵⁴

Challenges for Children with Special Needs: Many children with special needs are identified during their preschool years, but there are problems hindering the early identification of children who need services. The primary reasons children are not identified are: the parent is unaware of typical development and has no concerns; the family is transient or undocumented; and the family does not want the child, "labeled."⁵⁵

Many children who are initially classified to be in need of special education are later declassified. The declassification may occur when a child reaches appropriate developmental milestones. But some children who were initially declassified re-emerge as in need of supportive services later in their academic careers, usually around third grade. Mr. Heintz focused on the need for staff development and training to help preschool teachers and child-care providers recognize developmental milestones that children should reach and the "red flag" signs and symptoms of developmental delays and disorders. He noted that the state's required preschool teacher training in special education is "minimal." Each school should develop its own staff development program to help teachers identify developmental delays. But this is not happening. While the state is considering adding some special-education training to its requirements for preschool teachers, Mr. Heinz believes that the state should "direct appropriate training" for all preschool teachers.⁵⁶

The Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN)/Physically Handicapped children's Program (PHCP) assures access to care for children with special health care needs and their families. CSHCN staff links families to resources to help meet a child's special health care needs. Children may remain in this program from birth to age 21.⁵⁷

Janice Friedman, CEO of Variety Child Learning Center, which provides early intervention and preschool special-education services for children with special needs, summarized in her written testimony the services received by special-needs preschool children:

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

“Young children with special needs are educated in a variety of different settings, including, but not limited to: special classes in integrated settings; child-care centers; preschools; UPK settings; and homes. The quality of these programs, as well as the staff qualifications, have an impact on the education they receive. Each child’s education is guided by an IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan) for children under three or an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) for children above three. Many children also have a BIP (Behavior Intervention Plan)...The child-care staff must have the skills and knowledge to work with the special needs population....It’s not okay to equate child care with babysitting.”⁵⁸

Again, with preschool education provided by various entities, including the Preschool Special Education Program for eligible children, it is not surprising that not all preschool children have access to an equally appropriate educational program. Ms. Gammerman pointed out in her testimony that a certain number of children who are evaluated are not eligible for preschool special education because they do not have a delay that is significant enough for the child to meet the criteria. A far greater percentage of children are found to be eligible. Sometimes parents of a child who is ineligible for the Preschool Special Education Program will apply to a Head Start program, with the hope that their child will receive an education through that program. Some children who are eligible for Head Start, however, may be placed on a waiting list, due to the demand for their program. The 2012 state cut in Suffolk’s Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) allocation which funds child-care subsidies for working parents (a policy decision to be discussed in detail below) made circumstances much harder for some working families who have special-needs children.⁵⁹

Cheryl Keshner, senior paralegal/community advocate at the Empire Justice Center, made a similar observation about the class divide, in her written testimony about the negative impacts on working-poor families of Suffolk County’s 2012 reduction in eligibility for CCBG-subsidized child care from 200% to 100% of the Federal Poverty Level, which was caused by the state’s reduction in Suffolk’s CCBG allocation:

“Another category of families which was particularly hard hit [by the cuts in the child-care subsidy] was those with children who have special needs, which included learning disabilities, asthma, mental-health needs or other conditions requiring special attention. These families with disabled children should have been eligible [according to federal law, to receive the child-care subsidy if they earned up to] 200% of the poverty level [even with the reduction in eligibility to 100% of the poverty level for the general public]; however, they were not initially advised of this option by DSS [Suffolk County Department of Social Services.] Some of these children required special care, which could not be provided by a random person. Yet Suffolk County DSS often claimed that these children weren’t ‘disabled enough’ to meet the eligibility criteria. Only after

⁵⁸ Friedman, Janice, CEO, Variety Child Learning Center. Written testimony submitted December, 2013.

⁵⁹ Gammerman, Op. cit.

numerous fair hearings challenging [the legality] of these discontinuances did DSS begin to rethink its policy and procedures in this area.”⁶⁰

Ms. Keshner said that these problems were especially onerous for immigrant parents. While some of these parents were citizens, some were undocumented, with children born in the U.S. who were therefore citizens and entitled to services.

“Some of these [undocumented] parents have been fearful of making waves because they do not want to call attention to themselves for fear of deportation. In one situation, a parent with a child who was legally blind—and thus should have been eligible for the child-care subsidy at the higher income level [200% of Federal Poverty Level]—chose to remain silent when her subsidy was discontinued. She shuttled her child from person to person for child care because she was so fearful...The many child-care providers with whom I have spoken (primarily Latino immigrants) see their child care as more than a job and have developed trusting and loving relationships with these children and their parents. The child-care providers understand these children and their particular needs and cannot be easily replaced on a moment’s notice. They are not simply babysitters, but caregivers, nurturers and educators. Quality, reliable, affordable child care is a necessity for families to maintain financial self-sufficiency and for our children to grow up emotionally secure.”⁶¹

Child Care on Long Island: Giving “Some” Children a Strong Start

The research is clear: Quality early learning and child care provide children with a strong start—especially poor children—as they enter kindergarten, as well as later in their education. Working parents—especially those families where both parents must work to pay their bills—and the larger Long Island economy and society, accrue many benefits as well. Yet, the supply of quality, affordable child care on Long Island has not kept pace with demand or with the need. As Dr. Friedman testified, “Half of all preschoolers are not in the formal, regulated market of child-care providers...Over the past year, there has been a chorus of voices singing the praises of early-childhood education...However, the gap between the rhetoric and reality is stunning.”⁶² Affluent parents have no trouble placing their children in quality early-learning settings. As a result, their children are guaranteed a strong start. For most Long Islanders, however, finding and affording quality child care is an increasingly difficult challenge that will be explored in greater detail in the next section of this report.

⁶⁰ Keshner, Cheryl, MSW, senior paralegal/community advocate, Empire Justice Center. E-mailed testimony submitted on March 6, 2014.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Friedman, December 2 hearing testimony, Op. cit.

Part II

Challenges: The Elusive but Critical Pursuit of Quality Child Care in Suffolk

"On Long Island, one of the biggest obstacles to making systemic change...to the child-care system is the total lack of a system." Jennifer Marino Rojas, The Rauch Foundation

Modalities of the Formal Child-Care Market: A Patchwork of Silos

There are many factors influencing the quality of child-care programs on Long Island. First is the ability to meet basic health and safety standards. Then, adherence to research-based instructional elements such as class size, teacher qualifications and validated curricula. Oversight varies, depending on the type of program and the government agency that regulates it.

Many of Suffolk's youngest children are in the informal or legally-exempt market, usually made up of grandparents or neighbors, where there is very limited oversight from any regulatory body. For child-care centers (also known as day-care centers), family child-care homes, Head Start programs, and pre-K, there are strong regulations governing their operations, from either the New York State Office of Children and Family Services or the New York State Department of Education. Nursery schools, which offer child care for less than three hours a day, often in churches, are neither licensed nor registered with OCFS and therefore not regulated.



Quality is uneven among the various child-care settings on Long Island, due largely to the insufficient resources provided to help providers meet program standards. The lack of a comprehensive coordinated system hinders efforts to improve quality. New York has created a quality rating and improvement system called QualitystarsNY (described below) whose goal is to support providers in their efforts to improve quality. Assuring quality is costly, and there remains an unresolved struggle for funds to expand the *supply* of services, versus funds needed to assure that these services are of a *quality* that will yield positive outcomes for children.

Any parent who ever sought an affordable, quality child-care or early-learning setting for a child between the ages of birth and five years knows how difficult this search can be. In 2012, there were almost 900 licensed or registered providers in Suffolk County, which constitute a large portion of the “formal, regulated child-care market,” the balance being Head Start and UPK. Licensed child-care providers (child care centers and group family home providers) and registered providers (family home care and school-age child care) are subject to close scrutiny by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), which will be discussed in more detail below. A description of these the licensed and registered modalities of child care can be found in Chart 2 below.

Informal or legally exempt providers (again, grandparents or other relatives, neighbors or friends offering child care in their homes) are not regulated by OCFS but must be listed with OCFS by signing an attestation.

OCFS licensed and registered providers and legally-exempt child-care providers are eligible to receive government subsidies through the Suffolk County Department of Social Services (DSS) for children who are in the welfare system or whose parents are receiving a child-care subsidy for working-poor families (to be discussed in detail below.) The informal, legally-exempt providers have minimal scrutiny. The Child Care Council of Suffolk is contracted by OCFS to enroll legally-exempt providers in the DSS reimbursement system. In this enrollment process, the council is responsible for inspecting only 20% of the total number of legally-exempt providers.⁶³

The choices for OCFS regulated child care can seem bewildering. Chart 2 summarizes the child-care modalities regulated by OCFS.

⁶³ Walerstein, Janet. Statement at the April 11 Child Care Committee meeting of the Welfare to Work Commission.

Chart 2
Modalities of Child Care Regulated by OCFS in Suffolk County, 2014⁶⁴

Modality	Number of Providers	Percent of Total
Child Day Care Centers provide care for more than six children at a time, not in a personal residence.	195	23%
Family Day Care Homes provide care for three to six children at a time in a residence; may add one or two school-age children. The maximum allowable number of children will depend on whether there are and how many infants are in care.	223	26%
Group Family Day Care Homes provide care for seven to twelve children at a time in a residence; may add one or two school-age children. The maximum allowable number of children will depend on whether there are and how many infants are in care. A provider must use an assistant when more than six children are present.	336	39%
School-Age Child Care Programs provide care for more than six children from kindergarten through age twelve. Care for children during non-school hours; also may provide care during school vacation periods and holidays.	108	13%
TOTAL	862	

In addition to the OCFS-regulated providers, parents can place children in the four-hour UPK program described above if their elementary school district is one of the 60 (of 118 districts with elementary schools) on Long Island that has opted to receive UPK funds. Another 1,600 Long Island children from income-eligible poor families are enrolled in one of 18 Head Start centers. As Diane Eppolito, quality assurance and planning analyst for Long Island Head Start, explained the program in her testimony:

“Our mission is to break the cycle of poverty by providing high-quality, comprehensive child-development service and family-support services to income-eligible families...Head Start promotes the school readiness of children ages birth to five from low-income families by enhancing cognitive, social and emotional development. Head Start is a comprehensive program providing not only educational services but health, nutrition, mental health and family support services.”⁶⁵

⁶⁴ OCFSNY.gov

⁶⁵ Eppolito, Diane, quality assurance and planning analyst, Long Island Head Start. Testimony at the December 18 Welfare to Work Commission early learning and child care hearing.

Some of Suffolk’s OCFS-regulated child-care providers receive tuition from income-eligible (165% of Federal Poverty Level beginning July 1, 2014) parents who receive a subsidy to help pay their child-care expenses. The subsidy is provided through the state’s Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) program, which has been referenced above and will be discussed in detail below. Most of the children served by OCFS-regulated providers are private-pay, that is, they or their parents are not receiving government-subsidized child care or public assistance (welfare.) UPK is regulated and funded by the New York State Department of Education. Head Start is funded by the federal government but licensed and regulated by OCFS.

The fact that there are multiple state and federal funding streams and regulatory agencies has created a network of child-care provider silos, independent of and competitive with each other, rather than a coordinated child-care system. The Child Care Council of Suffolk is authorized by OCFS to serve as a child care resource and referral agency, assisting Suffolk parents who are trying to negotiate this complex maze of child-care providers. The Council receives 7,000 telephone and Internet requests for help each year.⁶⁶

A number of child-care experts who testified at the hearings expressed concern, at times dismay, about the wide array of funding streams, regulations and overlapping programs that have created competing silos rather than a coherent and comprehensive child-care system. For example, Sarah Walzer, chief executive officer of the Parent-Child Home Program, testified at the December 2 hearing:

“The short answer to the question, ‘who’s minding the kids?’ is that a diverse array of individuals and services are taking care of young children in the county and in the state, and if we do not work together to build a comprehensive system that supports and links all these care providers, we will continue to have too many children, particularly children living in poverty, entering school unprepared...Children are being minded by parents, grandparents, other family, friends and neighbor caregivers, licensed and unlicensed family child-care providers, and child-care centers. Many children will be cared for in several of these environments over the course of their preschool years.”⁶⁷

Jennifer Marino Rojas from the Rauch Foundation went even further, describing New York State’s governance structure for child care as “incoherent” and “crazy”:

“In New York—and especially on Long Island—one of the biggest obstacles to making systemic change to expand and improve the child-care system is the total lack of a system. [There are many] local, state and federal agencies involved with

⁶⁶ Walerstein, Op. cit.

⁶⁷ Walzer, Sarah, CEO, Parent-Child Home Program. Testimony at the December 2 Welfare to Work Commission early learning and child care hearing.

providing early childhood programming...This fractured system creates inefficiency and dilutes accountability. It makes finger-pointing and inaction very easy.”⁶⁸

The almost 900 licensed and registered Suffolk child-care providers do not include the informal or legally-exempt providers who number about 400 in Suffolk and, as noted above, are neither licensed nor regulated by OCFS, providing child care to the children of relatives or neighbors in their own homes.

There is also an underground of *illegal* providers who offer some form of group child care but do not register or seek a license to do so from OCFS. The illegal child-care providers are particularly problematic and potentially a danger when unscrupulous providers create situations that could threaten the health and safety of children ages birth to five who are in their care. Suffolk Department of Social Services Commissioner John O’Neill, testifying at the December 2 hearings, said clearly: “We don’t want our children in underground [illegal] facilities.”⁶⁹

Commissioner O’Neill’s comments about underground, illegal providers came just months after a state report found that Long Island had the most child-care health and safety violations in the past 24 months of any region outside of New York City, with each violation averaging 4.5 infractions, some of them very minor. These violations, while not the norm and atypical of Long Island child-care settings, occurred in *licensed* facilities. It is therefore reasonable to assume that conditions in illegal child-care facilities are even worse than these aberrations. As reported in *Newsday*:

“The 406 [licensed Long Island] providers had a total of 1,825 violations...The report—done by the Independent Democratic Conference that co-leads the State Senate—examined violations issued by the state Office of Children and Family Services...‘Our analysis also shows that various day-care centers are repeatedly violating some of these very serious regulations, remain in business and have faced no enforcement action,’ said the report...The report identified one Long Island center with repeated child-abuse violations: Hempstead-based E.O.C. Inc. It was cited for ‘abuse or maltreatment of a child’ on July 16, 2012, and for ‘isolating a child in a closet’ or an unsupervised area on Oct. 24, 2011...Three Long Island day-care centers had more than 50 violations each, putting them third, fourth and fifth on the list of top violators, said the report...Infractions ranged from failing to do staff background checks and directly supervise children to partially blocked exits and unlabeled drugs.”⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Marino Rojas, Op. cit.

⁶⁹ O’Neill, John, commissioner, Suffolk County Department of Social Services. Testimony at the December Welfare to Work Commission early learning and child care hearing.

⁷⁰ Gralla, Joan. “LI Day Care Centers Cited for State Violations,” *Newsday*, May 30, 2013.

It needs to be reiterated that the commission believes these regulatory violations are not the norm for licensed and regulated Long Island child-care providers. But, with a patchwork of programmatic silos, and absent a coordinated system to deliver and oversee child care, along with an underground network of unlicensed and unregulated providers, it is troublesome that some children may be placed in child-care settings that are inadequate and, sadly, in some situations, potentially dangerous.

It's Not Babysitting: Dispelling Popular Myths about Quality Child Care

One of the barriers to creating a more coherent, accountable and professional child-care delivery system is the widespread myth that child care is, at its core, simply babysitting. According to this popular myth, anybody can do it: parents, neighbors, grandparents, teenagers, siblings. But, as Shea Levin, a parent and child-care advocate, said in her testimony on December 18, "Just because you are a mom doesn't mean that you are now a teacher."⁷¹

Perhaps the goals of parents seeking quality child care are a good place to begin dispelling this myth. Describing her frustration finding quality child care, Keesha Bailey told her focus group that at one point she was spending "\$250 a week on babysitting" to which Eric Mayer, another focus group parent, quipped, "To have them watch TV." Before she found a quality setting, Ms. Bailey said that she "counted diapers that my children had when they left in the morning so I could determine how often they were changed." Parents in this focus group spoke about feeling that their children were "unsafe" in certain settings or of other settings being "chaotic." When asked to describe the quality of their current setting, Rainbow Chimes, these parents used descriptives such as this from Earline Milligan, "You know when your child comes here, you are comfortable." Or again, Ms. Bailey, "Rainbow Chimes comes as close to loving my kids as I do." They spoke of a program that was structured, "but not overly structured, not rote." They described a staff "that wants to be here," who teach from "a defined curriculum" about which the parents receive frequent updates on their child's progress, as Christine Reilly described these reports, "from the number of poops to concepts learned." Ms. Reilly added, "I feel they are caring for my child as if they were me." Another parent, David Welch, defined quality this way: "The staff here is loving and attentive."⁷²

Care, structure, solid curriculum content, health and safety—these were the dominant themes parents used to describe a quality child-care setting. The need for a safe, welcoming environment in a comfortable physical space was mentioned by several child-care experts, including Angela Zimmerman of Molloy College.⁷³ Almost all of the child-care experts who

⁷¹ Levin, Shea, campaign director, Every Child Matters—Long Island. Testimony at the December 2 Welfare to Work Commission early learning and child care hearing.

⁷² Bailey, Keesha, Eric Mayer, Earline Milligan, Christine Reilly, David Welch. Statements at the child-care focus group, Rainbow Chimes Early Education Center, Huntington, November 18, 2013.

⁷³ Zimmerman, Op. cit.

testified at the hearings were asked to define a quality child-care program in ways that differentiate it from a quality babysitting experience.

Janet Walerstein stated outright that “we need to combat the view that anyone can care for a child.” She noted that the ultimate sign of a quality program is that the children are “used to being excited about learning.”⁷⁴ Richard Iannuzzi, the then-president of NYSUT, stated that “all providers should be held to learning and curriculum standards, so that there is a seamless transition from one age group to the next” but that these standards should be measured by preschool children’s behaviors, not by their “test scores—how they fill out the bubbles on standardized tests.”⁷⁵



⁷⁴ Walerstein, Op. cit.

⁷⁵ Iannuzzi, Op. cit.

A number of child-care experts such as Mr. Iannuzzi, Professor Palley and Denise Dowell of the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA), the union that represents home-care providers, emphasized staff training and teacher-child ratios as important measures of quality. Elizabeth Geary, director of the Community Program Centers of Long Island, testified that a quality program must have a defined curriculum, a trained staff and incentives for the staff to advance as well as salaries that are commensurate with the staff's training.⁷⁶

Chart 3 contains suggested criteria that parents should look for when selecting a quality child-care setting. These criteria clearly establish that a quality program is “not babysitting.”

Chart 3
Top 10 Pre-K Questions: What Parents Need to Know About
Quality Preschool⁷⁷

1. Can I make an appointment to visit your program and spend time in a classroom?

What to look for: safe spaces with children comfortable and engaged in what they are doing, not easily distracted or wandering aimlessly; children seem happy, not distressed, bored or crying; adults are caring, sensitive (not harsh), responsive to children's needs and requests, and involved in what the children are doing by helping children solve problems, accomplish projects and learn; time and space for active outdoor and indoor play as well as quiet time. Children's voices dominate.

2. Is there a curriculum, and how well do teachers implement it?

What to look for: a proven curriculum model aligned with early-learning standards that cover physical well-being and motor development, social/emotional development, approaches toward learning, language development, and cognition and general knowledge. Teachers plan for each day and individualize for each child; play with teachers involved is a big part of the day.

3. What are the qualifications of the teachers?

What to look for: four-year college degrees, with specialized training in early-childhood education and child development. Your child should be assigned a teacher with these qualifications who is always responsible for your child. Teachers should have annual in-service training requirements and continuing training in such areas as safety practices, first aid, and emergency preparedness.

⁷⁶ Dowell, Denise, Civil Service Employees Association, Elizabeth Geary, director of the Community Program Centers of Long Island, Elizabeth Palley, Richard Iannuzzi. Testimony at the December Welfare to Work Commission early learning and child-care hearing.

⁷⁷ National Institute for Early Education Research: <http://www.nieer.org/publications/related-publications/top-10-pre-k-questions-what-parents-need-know-about-high-quality>

4. How much are your teachers paid?

What to look for: [how do salaries compare with what private or public school teachers earn for teaching kindergarten or first grade?]

5. What is the turnover rate for your teachers and assistant teachers?

What to look for: low turnover rates, teachers and assistants who have been there for years.

6. What are the qualifications of the assistant teachers?

What to look for: some required training, the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or college course work in a prekindergarten area are good indicators.

7. How large are the classes, and what are the staff-child ratios?

What to look for: classes no larger than 20 and preferably smaller (15-18), especially if your child is more comfortable and will receive more personal attention in a smaller class. Classes must have at least one teacher per 10 children.

8. Are children assessed for learning difficulties and other problems (hearing, vision), do teachers know how to work with children who have special problems, and are parents involved in the program?

What to look for: formal and informal health, sensory, and cognitive screenings, access to consultants on children's health and other special learning needs, teachers who keep ongoing records on how children are doing and develop individual plans for working with each child, opportunities for parent conferences and family involvement.

9. Does the program provide healthy meals and/or snacks?

What to look for: programs that show a concern about children's nutrition and developing healthy eating habits, and provide nutritious food.

10. Does routine monitoring for program quality take place?

What to look for: [Licensed programs in New York State typically have two unannounced inspection visits per year by a state representative. Parents can ask the director about the results of the most recent inspection. (See inspection and regulation guidelines in the next section of this report.) But, it is up to the parent to be in touch with the center director and their child's teachers, to make sure children are properly cared for on a day-to-day basis.]⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Friedman, Dana. Email to Welfare to Work chair Richard Koubek, March 19, 2014.



Ensuring Health and Safety Standards in Child-Care Settings

In New York State, the licensed/registered child-care providers are highly regulated on health and safety issues by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). At least two to four times a year, the OCFS licensing representative is required to do an on-site inspection of each licensed child care-center and group family home care provider as well as each registered family home care and school-age provider. They also will respond with an on-site visit to a complaint that might be made, or if a situation occurs that requires the child-care provider to self-report an incident to OCFS. The twice-a-year inspections are always without notice. Based on these inspections, a report is written, and violations to the regulations are noted on the provider's profile on the OCFS website. The provider then has a certain amount of time to correct any violations before enforcement action is taken. The more serious the violation, the sooner it should be corrected. Corrections are then noted on the profile on the OCFS website. Repeat serious violations are subject to fines and possible revocation of the license. This information is public on the OCFS website and helps inform parents about any health or safety concerns they may want to inquire about before choosing a program for their child.⁷⁹

Each licensed or registered child-care provider has a profile posted on the OCFS website. Licensed and registered providers consider the results of their inspections to be their "report

⁷⁹ Liguori, Kathy. Vice chair of Welfare to Work Commission and Chair of the Child Care Committee. Written testimony submitted March 22, 2014.

card.” The regulations as written are subject to interpretation and, depending on the situation, a child-care provider may dispute or challenge a citation received from their OCFS inspector by filing for a fair hearing. These hearings are for the more serious enforcement actions that threaten revocation of the license. Here is one example of a regulation enforcement that occurred on Long Island, as reported by a child-care center provider:

“In 2011, a four-year-old child was participating in a teacher-directed relay race on the playground. When running, the child tripped and fell onto a rubberized playground surface. The child hurt a wrist when breaking the fall. No break of bone or skin was visible. Ice was applied and the child was brought to a resting area with one-on-one care and attention. Parents were called immediately, but since the parent could not get to the center within the next few hours, the parent requested that the center call an ambulance and bring the child to the hospital, where the parent would meet them later. The ambulance was called as requested for what the center staff thought could be a possible sprain. Two days later the parents reported that they had received medical confirmation of a slight fracture on their child’s wrist. Upon becoming aware of this new information, the provider self-reported the incident to OCFS. An investigation ensued. The teacher, who was a college graduate with distinction, felt as if she were being interrogated, while she also felt terrible that the child had been hurt ‘on her watch.’ Among the many questions the teacher was appropriately asked by the OCFS investigator were: What was the lesson plan? Where were you standing? How many children were allowed to run at the same time? How many children were in your care? Did you have an assistant? Was there a witness? Was there blood? The teacher was cleared; however, the center, even though they challenged the OCFS determination that there had been a violation of a regulation, was cited with this violation: *‘The provider must immediately notify the office upon learning of the death, serious injury or infectious illness of an enrolled child which occurred while the child was in care at the center or was being transported by the provider’.*”⁸⁰

This violation remained on the center’s profile for two years because, even though the staff self-reported the incident two days later, upon learning of the hairline fracture, they did not report it “immediately,” as per the OCFS regulation—that same day—right after the ambulance had been called. The Long Island regional office of OCFS is very adept and persistent in maintaining compliance with the regulations that govern the safety of children, although some providers have complained that the regulations are vague and require amendment for more specificity, as per the illustration above, regarding the citation issued to a child-care center for not self-reporting a child’s injury on the day that it occurred.

The OCFS regulations are separated by modality: Child Day Care Center, Family Day Care Home, Group Family Day Care Home, School Age Child-Care Program. All are mandated to adhere to

⁸⁰ Ibid.

the regulations. Some of the major regulatory categories, as well as examples of the specific regulations, are summarized and illustrated in Appendix B.

The OCFS regulations also stipulate staff-child ratios as summarized in Chart 4.

Chart 4⁸¹
New York State OCFS Staff-Child Ratio Regulations

418-1.8 Supervision of Children

AGE OF CHILDREN	STAFF/CHILD MAXIMUM RATIO(*)	GROUP SIZE(**)
Under 6 weeks(***)	1:3	6
6 weeks to 18 months	1:4	8
18 months to 36 months	1:5	12
3 years	1:7	18
4 years	1:8	21
5 years	1:9	24

Minimum Staff/Child Ratios Based on Group Size for School-aged Children

AGE OF CHILDREN	STAFF/CHILD MAXIMUM RATIO(*)	GROUP SIZE(**)
Through 9 years	1:10	20
10-12 years	1:15	30

(*) Staff/child ratio refers to the maximum number of children per staff person.

(**) Group size refers to the number of children cared for together as a unit. Group size is used to determine the minimum staff/child ratio, based upon the age of the children in the group.

Regulation 418-1.13 “Staff Qualifications” stipulates the minimum standards or expectations for child-care center staff qualifications. Quality programs seek to employ certified teachers, some with master’s degrees. As in any organization, an employee’s work ethic as well as his/her respectful, nurturing, and caring attention to the children often surpass some of the individuals with advanced degrees. The minimum OCFS staff qualifications are summarized in Chart 5.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Chart 5⁸²
New York State OCFS Child-Care Staff Qualifications Regulations

	Education		Experience
Head of Group for preschoolers	Associate's degree in Early Childhood, Child Development or related field	AND	No additional experience necessary
	OR		
	Child Development Associate credential, or, 9 college credits in Early Childhood, Child Development or a related field, with a plan leading to a Child Development Associate credential	AND	Two years experience related to caring for children
Head of Group for infants/toddlers	In addition to the above, 1 year of specific training and/or experience in infant or toddler care, which may be demonstrated by obtaining an Infant Toddler Child Care credential		
Head of Group for school-aged children	Associate's degree in Child Development, recreation or related field	AND	No addition experience required
	OR		
	High School Diploma or its equivalent	AND	Two years direct experience working with children under 13 years of age
Assistant to Head of Group (all age groups)	High School diploma or its equivalent	OR	Substantial experience working with children under 13 years of age

Thus, on matters of health and safety, licensed child-care programs are clearly well-regulated in New York State. As will be discussed next, however, educational program quality is not nearly as well regulated.

Ensuring Quality Educational Programs in Early-Learning Settings

All of the research on the positive impacts of early childhood education referenced above is based on the presumption of quality—that programs, classrooms and teachers are prepared to offer a stimulating, enriching environment that helps young children develop the skills they need for success in school and life. The elements of quality are intended to address all aspects

⁸² Ibid.

of child development—health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity and self-regulation, cognitive skills, literacy, and communications. Unfortunately, many early-childhood programs—in all types of settings—do not offer quality. They often do not have the resources, knowledge or expertise to provide the optimal environment for early-childhood development. While New York State has stringent health and safety regulations for licensed and registered child-care providers, as discussed above, Child Care Aware found problems with oversight in other parts of the country. “Our conclusion after six years of studying child-care regulations and oversight is that we still cannot say with confidence that America’s children are protected by state licensing and oversight systems. Nor can we say that child-care policies are in place to help young children learn and be ready for school.”⁸³

The three longitudinal studies widely used as a demonstration of economic returns of high-quality preschool include the Perry Preschool Project out of High/Scope, the Abecedarian Project (cited above) and the Chicago Parent-Child Program. The features common to all three study sites—and consistent with numerous other studies—are:⁸⁴

- Children received services early (Abecedarian at 3 months, others at 3 years);
- Teachers were well-educated, well-trained and well-compensated, which resulted in little turnover;
- Small class size;
- Intensive contact hours over a period of almost two years; some contact through school-age years;
- Strong transition program;
- Home visiting (Perry Preschool had home visits for 1.5 hours/week);
- Active parent education;
- A strong curriculum that focused on children learning and not achievement.

As Dr. Friedman pointed out:

“The travesty in the field of early-childhood education is that we know how to provide quality early-childhood education; we just haven’t provided the resources—both financial and technical—to help programs offer quality. The teachers in many child-care centers and family child-care homes may have limited education, low incomes and little time to pursue higher education degrees. In school-based pre-K programs, teachers may be certified and well paid, but they are generally not exposed to child development theory and early-childhood education.”⁸⁵

⁸³ *Child Care in America: 2012 State Fact Sheet*, p. 6

⁸⁴ Ellen Galinsky. *Economic Benefits of High-Quality Early Childhood Programs: What Makes the Difference?* Families and Work Institute, 2007, p. 19-20.

⁸⁵ Friedman, Dana, EdD, president, The Early Years Institute. Email to Welfare to Work chair Richard Koubek, March 18, 2014.

Steve Barnett, the director of the National Institute for Early Education Research, commented on quality this way: “Let me run a program where I get to hire two teachers for every 12 kids and pay them public school salaries. I’ll bet my retirement plan on the outcome. Instead, we pay teachers a pittance, give them 18 kids and an assistant who is just a high school graduate—and then there are complaints that the results haven’t been replicated!”⁸⁶

The gold standard for quality in early-childhood centers has been established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Their accreditation standards are rigorous. Only 8,200 child-care centers are accredited out of 110,252 nationwide. In New York State, 287 centers are accredited out of 4,193 throughout the state. On Long Island, 11 centers are accredited by NAEYC (14 in Nassau and 12 in Suffolk) out of an estimated 210 centers in Nassau and 195 centers in Suffolk. Where accredited centers account for 7% of centers nationally and across the state, less than 3% of centers on Long Island have achieved the highest level of quality.⁸⁷ Some centers that were NAEYC accredited opted out due to the changes in accreditation requirements that lead teachers hold a master’s degree, the lack of funds to support those salaries required by such teachers, and the anticipated rollout of QUALITYstarsNew York, which will be discussed below.⁸⁸

New York State has joined 40 other states in creating a quality rating and improvement system that provides programs with quality standards across all forms of care, as well as technical assistance and funding to help meet the standards. In addition, the system provides help to parents in assessing levels of quality. As discussed below, QUALITYstarsNY holds promise for New York if funds are provided to *fully* implement a quality rating and improvement system for New York.

As New York contemplates huge expansions of pre-K education, over half of which is contracted to community-based provider organizations such as child-care centers, it is a critical time to focus on quality. Again, Dr. Friedman summarized the quality problem:

“We cannot expect to achieve the same outcomes as found in the longitudinal studies if we do not provide the same inputs. Elementary school principals increasingly find themselves responsible for public prekindergarten programs, but few of them have a background in young children’s development and learning. Many started out as middle-school or high-school teachers. Now they are faced with the challenge of meeting new state standards for kindergarten and preschool. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, these administrators often lean toward didactic instruction methods that are ill-suited to young children.”⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Kirp, David. *The Sandbox Investment: The Preschool Movement and Kids-First Politics*, 2007, p. 58

⁸⁷ Friedman, Dana E. *Windows of Opportunity: A Look at Pre-K on Long Island*, The Early Years Institute, 2009

⁸⁸ Liguori, Kathy. Email to Welfare to Work chair Richard Koubek, April 30, 2014.

⁸⁹ Friedman. Email, March 18, 2014, Op. cit.

Long-term research and decades of classroom experience show that a combination of child-initiated play and hands-on active learning is the most effective strategy in early education. But these time-tested methods have been disappearing from kindergarten as well as pre-K, primarily because of a lack of training in developmentally-appropriate practice.⁹⁰ The importance of staff development for preschool teachers is discussed in more detail below.

Quality improvements made in early childhood settings must be accompanied by supports for children before they enter a formal program. The benefits of child care and pre-K may come too late, since so much has happened to children by the time they are four. And the benefits of quality child care may not endure if these children enter low-quality K-12 public schools. Providing strong support for families throughout the community during infancy and toddlerhood must be viewed as a critical component of a quality early-childhood education. This sentiment was embodied in the vision for early childhood by the New York State Board of Regents in 2005⁹¹:

“Early-childhood education for all children ages birth through grade 3 is an integrated system designed to ensure that each child receives a healthy start and attains the skills and concepts to have a successful academic experience in developmentally-appropriate programs. Components of the system include standards-based programs that start early, instruction by highly qualified persons and an environment that coordinates comprehensive services and provides information and support to families.”



⁹⁰ Miller, Edward and Joan Almon. *Crisis in the Kindergarten: Why Children Need to Play in School*, Alliance for Childhood, 2009, p. 7.

⁹¹ *Regents Policy on Early Education for Student Achievement in a Global Community*, New York State Department of Education, December 21, 2005

The Importance of Validated Early-Childhood Curricula

There are no recommended curricula for early-childhood programs to use in New York State. But there is the New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core, which aligns with the New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy, as well as for mathematics at the prekindergarten level. The New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core is organized into five broad developmental and interrelated domains. The five distinct, but highly interrelated domains provide the structure for the New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core.⁹² A brief description of each domain appears below:

- **Approaches to Learning:** How children become involved in learning and acquiring knowledge.
- **Physical Development and Health:** Children’s physical health and ability to engage in daily activities.
- **Social and Emotional Development:** The emotional competence and ability to form positive relationships that give meaning to children’s experiences in the home, school, and larger community.
- **Communication, Language, and Literacy:** How children understand, create, and communicate meaning.
- **Cognition and Knowledge of the World:** What children need to know and understand about their world, and how they apply what they know. This domain is a direct reflection of the content competencies and knowledge of the Common Core Learning Standards.

Programs are just beginning to use this document to guide their curriculum selection. It is aligned with Head Start standards and those being created by QualitystarsNY which are described below. However, there is little guidance for program administrators in selecting a research-based, validated curriculum. Many textbook manufacturers are peddling packaged curricula that may or may not be research-based. Several states recommend or require that programs use research-based curricula that have been established and validated for many years in the early childhood community. Creative Curriculum, High/Scope and Bank Street are among the most widely-used, well-respected curricula in the field of early childhood. New Mexico allows only these three curricula to be used in their pre-K programs, while Georgia permits these three, plus the others listed in:

<http://decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/CurriculaModels.pdf>

The late David Weikart, founder of High/Scope and author of the Perry Preschool project, commented: “What matters aren’t the specifics of the curriculum but its purpose, the emphasis

⁹² Pre-K Foundations for the Common Core,
http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/common_core_standards/pdfdocs/nyslsprek.pdf

on thinking and decision-making versus skill-and-drill.”⁹³ This suggests, as is true for all of K through 12, that teachers need support and coaching in successfully implementing any curriculum.

Professors Willingham and Grissmer of the University of Virginia provided more insights into how quality preschool education benefits children from poorer families:

“The preschools that do work teach less well-prepared kids precursor skills, the kind that many wealthy kids learn at home, through activities that don’t look especially academic. Songs and rhyming games, for example, help children hear that words are composed of individual sounds, making it easier to learn how to read letters. Kids gain knowledge about the world—important for reading comprehension in later elementary years—when they are read to by their parents and when they listen to them. Jigsaw puzzles and globes help kids develop spatial skills. Household rules teach children to learn to control their impulses, part of learning self-discipline.”⁹⁴

But, they add, “Teaching these precursor skills in a preschool setting, rather than at home, is not easy.”

The Urgency and Importance of Professional Development

In order to have high-quality programs, it is necessary to have a highly competent workforce for the early childhood field. Professional development provides the path to achieving this goal.

The professional development of all early childhood educators—at all levels of expertise—should be an ongoing process. It should involve teachers and aides, administrators, cooks and bus drivers—all of whom touch the lives of children and their families at some point during the day. The National Association for the Education of Young Children stipulates that “all professionals need to continue to update their knowledge and skills—through a coherent and systematic program of learning experiences. Professional development experiences must be evidence based; structured to promote linkages between research and practice; and responsive to each learner’s background, experiences, and the current context of his/her role.”⁹⁵

New York State requires licensed child-care centers and registered family child-care homes to have 30 hours of training every two years. Pre-K programs require that teachers have state certification, but there is no requirement that they have training in developmentally appropriate practice for four-year olds. The Child Care Council of Suffolk, CSEA, and several universities and training organizations provide support to teachers and administrators in

⁹³ Kirp, Op. cit., p. 55.

⁹⁴ Willingham and Grissmer, Op. cit.

⁹⁵ National Association of Education of Young Children Position Paper. *What Is Professional Development In Early Childhood Education?* 2009, p. 2.

creating a quality program. Programs need more support, so they can avail themselves of the strong early-childhood expertise on Long Island.

Assessing Preschool Children's Progress

The overall purpose of assessment, regardless of age, is to help teachers make appropriate instructional decisions about how to best teach children. A common reaction from educators with regard to assessment is nervousness about the inappropriateness of “testing” children and fear about high-stakes decision-making, including the professional evaluation of teachers. Certainly, the use of assessment tools that are inappropriate for children should be avoided, whether they are in preschool or of elementary school age. Assessment must be tailored to fit the learning skills and behavior at a particular age and then change, as appropriate, to support children as they grow and develop. For example, young children learn and exhibit their learning in different ways than do older children.⁹⁶

Young children learn by doing, rather than just listening, and may best exhibit what they know in actions rather than in speech or writing. Furthermore, integrating assessment with curriculum and standards offers an opportunity to elevate the level of professionalism in the field of early education (birth to age eight), similar to that of other more evidence-based fields.

Assessment of children birth to age eight years is not conducted primarily for diagnostic purposes, that is, to determine whether the child has deficits or delays compared to peers his/her age. (A detailed discussion of diagnostic practices and procedures to identify developmental-delays can be found above in the Part I section on special-needs preschool children.) Rather, assessment focuses on gathering information needed to plan programs and curricula that will promote each child's progress. Assessments are conducted to:⁹⁷

- Find out what children are interested in;
- Find out children's strengths and areas of difficulty;
- Make informed decisions about interventions;
- Discover how children change over time;
- Learn what children know in particular areas, such as reading;
- Link with instruction, making sure instruction is responsive and appropriate, matching what children can and cannot do; and
- Serve as a basis to report to parents.

Assessment is NOT conducted to classify the child's “readiness” for inclusion in an educational setting and assessment is DEFINITELY NOT conducted to exclude the child from preschool or kindergarten because of an erroneously presumed lack of readiness. It is conducted to plan beneficial opportunities for each child. Recently, assessments, particularly in elementary

⁹⁶ Pennsylvania BUILD Initiative, Pennsylvania's Departments of Education and Public Welfare. *Early Childhood Assessment For Children From Birth To Age 8 (Grade 3)*, December 2005, p. 2

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 8

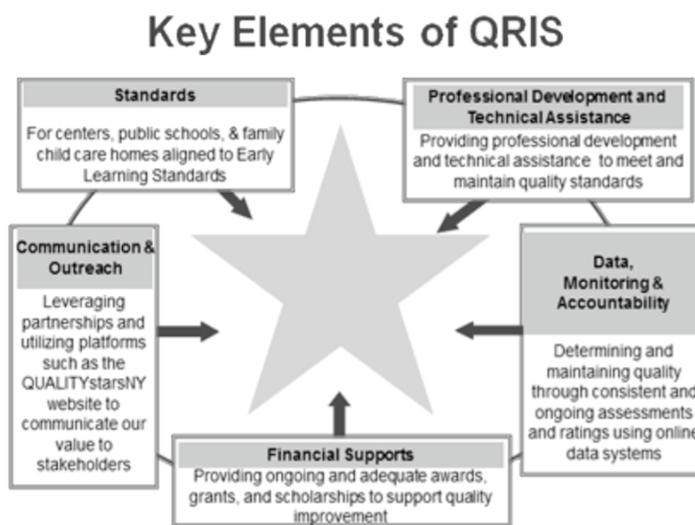
school, have focused on determining a child's achievement level, rather than to "identify" a child's intervention needs or to ascertain appropriate instructional strategies.⁹⁸

Assessing children as they enter kindergarten is particularly important to help determine the child's areas of strengths and needs so the teacher can adapt the learning environment and activities to the needs of all the children in the classroom. Schools do not use standard screening tools, and it is impossible to get a countywide understanding on levels of readiness for kindergartners across Suffolk.

QUALITYstarsNY: A Proven but Underfunded Approach to Child Care Quality

QUALITYstarsNY (QRIS) is New York State's Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), designed to improve the quality of all early care and learning programs. It is a project of the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), whose mission is to provide strategic direction and advice to the State of New York on early-childhood issues. All licensed programs are eligible to participate in this voluntary rating system, whether they are located in nursery schools, child-care centers, Head Start, public schools, or private

homes. Each participating program receives a star rating (of 1 to 5) that indicates the quality of the program, as well as support and consultation to assist with improvement of the program.⁹⁹



QUALITYstarsNY is a system that integrates standards for programs and teachers with professional development and support to help them meet the standards, along with parent education about what the standards mean. Similar to quality rating and improvement systems in other states, QUALITYstarsNY operates within the following five key areas: 1) Standards; 2) Professional Development and Technical Assistance; 3) Data, Monitoring and Accountability; 4) Financial Supports; 5) Communications and Outreach, as depicted in the figure above.¹⁰⁰

QUALITYstarsNY recognizes that an effective quality rating and improvement system, for programs in centers, schools and homes, rests on the foundation of a state's regulatory system.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ <http://www.winningbeginningny.org/QRIS.php>

¹⁰⁰ *New York's Recipe for Quality: 5 Key Ingredients*. QUALITYstarsNY. 2014. <http://qualitystarsny.org/discover-ingredients.php>

Thus, QUALITYstarsNY works closely with the state's system to provide additional quality improvement supports such as technical assistance and professional development. A one-star rating will be issued to any program that meets basic licensing requirements by completing a simple application. Through its five-star rating system, QUALITYstarsNY recognizes the programs that demonstrate quality above and beyond meeting New York's strong health and safety regulatory standards.¹⁰¹

QUALITYstarsNY employs Quality Improvement Specialists (QI Specialists) around the state to directly engage with programs/providers during the quality improvement process. QI Specialists offer a range of services and supports, from coaching to basic technical assistance and training. QI Specialists work with programs/providers to develop a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) based on the standards and other assessment information. The QI Specialists then link participants to available professional development opportunities and provide resources to support improvement activities.¹⁰²

QUALITYstarsNY uses Quality Scholars to support programs' professional development and quality improvement goals. In alignment with their Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), developed in collaboration with their QI Specialist, program staff may receive supports for activities including: consultation; non-credit-bearing training; college tuition; training and assessment fees associated with certain credential or certificate programs.

QUALITYstarsNY partners with the WELS System Foundation to analyze and convert program data into ratings and then develop and implement targeted QIPs based on those ratings. QUALITYstarsNY also collaborates with Aspire, New York's registry for early-childhood professionals, to collect and monitor workforce data, such as staff employment history, education and ongoing professional development.

QUALITYstarsNY utilizes Environment Rating Scales (ERS) assessments and CLASS assessments conducted by independent observers to assess the quality of a program's learning environment. ERS Assessment scores are factored into a program's overall star rating. CLASS Assessments are offered to programs with Active Ratings of 4 and 5 Stars. They are not factored into a site's star rating but are used to inform targeted quality improvement efforts.¹⁰³ Quality improvements made in early childhood settings must be accompanied by supports for children before they enter a formal program. The benefits of child care and pre-K may come too late, since so much has happened to children by the time they are four. And the benefits of quality child care may not endure if schools don't improve. Providing strong support for families throughout the community during infancy and toddlerhood must be viewed as a critical component of a quality early-childhood education. Quality improvements made in early childhood settings must be accompanied by supports for children before they enter a formal program. The benefits of child

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

care and pre-K may come too late, since so much has happened to children by the time they are four. And the benefits of quality child care may not endure if schools don't improve. Providing strong support for families throughout the community during infancy and toddlerhood must be viewed as a critical component of a quality early-childhood education.

Dr. Friedman, a strong supporter of QUALITYstarsNY, summarized its benefits:

“Funded with federal Race to the Top funds, over 400 early-childhood programs have been evaluated and given a star rating in New York over the past three years. The system has been well designed and tested. New York did not receive an early-learning challenge grant from the federal government because it had not made a financial commitment to its rating system. Efforts are underway to include QUALITYstarsNY in the governor's efforts to expand pre-K and other early childhood supports.”¹⁰⁴

Quality vs. Accessibility: A Child-Care Dilemma

At various times in preparation for the commission's hearings, a number of child-care experts warned that raising the quality of child care could have the counterproductive effect of raising costs and thus driving out smaller providers who generally serve lower-income families. Denise Dowell of CSEA, for example, pointed out at the August 29 Welfare to Work Commission's Child Care Committee meeting that proposed new federal regulations designed to raise the quality of child care throughout the nation could result in fewer state Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) subsidies to working-poor parents if the new regulations are not accompanied by an increase in the federal block grant. She warned that if the federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) that funds New York State's CCBG is flat-funded, both the federal government and the states will have to transfer funds from the child-care subsidy for working-poor families to cover additional administrative costs needed to monitor the new regulations.

Citing an OCFS letter of August 1, 2013, to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Care, which commented on the proposed regulations, Ms. Dowell pointed out that OCFS estimated that the new regulations could cost New York State \$72 million in the first year alone. That would result in a loss of 21,000 to 51,000 subsidized child-care slots for working-poor families. Janet Walerstein added that raising the quality of child-care without increasing funds to pay for the improved quality calls attention to the unresolved tension between the “quality of” and “access to” child-care services.¹⁰⁵ In her December 2 testimony, Ms. Dowell noted that the new federal regulations will include requirements such as more staff development for teachers, more background checks of child-care personnel and increased state inspections of child-care centers.¹⁰⁶ The final CCDBG regulations will be released later in 2014. The complex problem of child-care/early learning costs and funding will be explored in Part III.

¹⁰⁴ Friedman, Email, March 18, 2014, Op. cit.

¹⁰⁵ Minutes of the Child Care Committee, Welfare to Work Commission, August 29.

¹⁰⁶ Dowell, Op. cit.

Part III

Challenges: Quality Child Care and Early Learning in Suffolk— Who Pays... How Much?

“The travesty...is that we know how to provide quality early-childhood education; we just haven’t provided the resources....” Dana Friedman, EdD, The Early Years Institute

Rising Child-Care Costs on Long Island: Impacts on Families

In early March, 2014, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand issued a press release, “Child Care Costs Rising \$730 Each Year in New York,” documenting that the cost of child care on Long Island is increasing, since 2009, \$303.33 in Nassau and \$632.67 in Suffolk. “Now the average family spends approximately \$15,444 per year for an infant, \$13,000 for a toddler and \$13,624 for a school-age child,” the Senator’s press release stated.¹⁰⁷

On March 10, 2014, the *Long Island Business News* reported that “U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand wants to lessen the financial load of child care, which she says is unaffordable. The New York Democrat says she’s proposing legislation that would more than double the federal child-care tax credit—and also make it refundable.”¹⁰⁸ Senator Gillibrand’s data on child-care costs is very similar to the testimony provided by Dana Friedman, reported above. In describing child care as “unaffordable,” Senator Gillibrand highlights one of the central themes of this report.

The struggle to pay for child care is not a recent phenomenon. Kathy Malloy, who had been a single mother in the 1970s, testified at the December 2 hearing that, despite working three jobs, one in a county office, another part time at a mall and a third several times a year for the Suffolk County Board of Elections, “My \$359 biweekly county take-home pay didn’t stretch far enough, because the cost of day care in 1979 was \$150 biweekly,” which “took up 41% of my county paycheck.” She got by with support from her father, who helped pay for the child care.¹⁰⁹ It is the commission’s belief that, three decades later, Suffolk has seen enough of working families struggling to pay for their child care.

Diane Eppolito of Long Island Head Start testified that, “According to a new report prepared by Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ), the average family spends a quarter of its gross annual income on child care. A low-income family with two children can spend more than 40% of its combined salary...while single parents can spend as much as 73% of their total income on child care.”¹¹⁰ As reported above, Dr. Friedman testified that, according to New York State, no family should spend more than 10% of its gross income on child care.

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/ChildCare.pdf>

¹⁰⁸ *Long Island Business News*. NY Sen. Gillibrand Pushes Lower Child-Care Costs. March 10, 2014.

¹⁰⁹ Malloy, Kathy. Testimony at the December 2 Welfare to Work Commission early learning and child care hearing.

¹¹⁰ Eppolito, Op. cit.

The Rauch Foundation’s Jennifer Marino Rojas personalized her testimony at the December 2 hearing by saying, “My husband and I both work, and we struggle to pay child care.” Describing cost as “the biggest obstacle” facing the child-care industry, Ms. Marino Rojas concluded that “providers need to keep their costs in check, so that parents can afford child care, yet they are continuously asked to do more without additional support. Resources are desperately needed to help families afford care and to help providers enhance their programs to keep up with the new research and expectations.”¹¹¹ Shanequa Levin, campaign director of Every Child Matters, Long Island, summarized the cost squeeze:

“Federal child-care expenditures through the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) declined starting in 2002, when factoring in inflation. They increased in 2009 as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act [ARRA—the federal stimulus package enacted in 2009 to revive the economy during the Great Recession.] Unless Congress acts, this funding will start to decline substantially in the decade ahead, despite the high demand [for child care.] Overall, the federal government underwrites 25% of costs, state and local governments 15% and parents the remaining 60%. Other countries’ governments cover a much larger share, and many children attend programs free.”¹¹²



¹¹¹ Marino Rojas, Op. cit.

¹¹² Levin, Op. cit.

Business Costs for Child-Care Providers

Whatever their modality (center, home provider, etc.), child-care providers are in business and therefore subject to the costs that any business must factor into its operation. Chart 6 contains a sample budget provided by the Center for Children’s Initiatives (CCI) for non-personnel expenses of several child-care centers—the most expensive modality of child care—serving three different student population sizes. These non-personnel costs provide insight into the programmatic costs required of quality child-care providers.

Chart 6¹¹³
**Other Than Personnel Expenses (OTPE) for Year-Round,
 Extended-Day Child-Care Center Programs (Estimated Costs)**

		A 90 children 6 groups	B 105 children 6 groups	C 125 children 8 groups
OTHER THAN PERSONNEL SERVICES				
OCCUPANCY				
Rent ¹	\$15/sq ft	101,250	118,125	140,625
Utilities		6,000	6,000	8,000
Maintenance/Repairs	\$1,500/class	9,000	9,000	12,000
Insurance ²	\$100/child	9,000	10,500	12,500
TOTAL OCCUPANCY		125,250	143,625	173,125
SUPPLIES				
Classroom, Office, Maintenance	\$170/child	15,300	17,850	21,250
Food & Kitchen Supplies ³	\$625/child	56,250	65,625	78,125
TOTAL SUPPLIES		71,550	83,475	99,375
TOTAL EQUIPMENT⁴	\$100/child	9,000	10,500	12,500
TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE⁵		12,000	12,000	14,000
TOTAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT	\$1,000 x FTE staff	19,000	19,000	25,000
TOTAL OTHER⁶		6,000	6,000	8,000
TOTAL OTPS		242,800	274,600	332,000
TOTAL ANNUAL OTPS PER CHILD		2,697	2,615	2,656

¹ Assumes 7,000 square feet for smaller programs and 9,000 square feet for the eight-classroom program.

² Includes liability, fire/theft, board.

³ For many programs, CACFP funds will cover the cost of food.

⁴ Includes classroom, kitchen, office.

⁵ Includes phone, postage, printing, audit.

⁶ Includes parent programs, health, misc.

¹¹³ Center for Children’s Initiatives (CCI), *Early Care and Education—What it Costs, Budget Series: Full Day, Year Round Early Childhood Programs*, September, 2007.

While these data are not specific to Long Island's high costs, such as property taxes or utilities, and need to be adjusted for inflation, 2007-2014, they do provide insight into the high business costs associated with providing a quality child-care center. The CCI report also documented personnel costs (salaries and benefits for administrators; teachers; aides; mental health, nutritional and health consultants; a social worker; substitute teachers; clerical/administrative staff; janitorial staff) for the three sizes of child-care centers, which were: \$1,357,500 for a 90-child center; \$1,396,500 for a 105-child center; \$1,714,315 for a 125-child center. Totaling the OTPS and personnel expenses, the providers' costs per child ranged from \$16,000 to \$17,780.¹¹⁴

The CCI report was based on these assumptions, which provide additional insights into the cost requirements for running a quality child-care center that operates 10 hours a day, 5 days a week, year-round:

- Classrooms are large enough to serve the maximum number of children allowed by regulatory standards: 10 two year olds, 15 three year olds and 20 four year olds.
- Every classroom is led by a certified teacher, as required in state regulatory standards. Salaries reflect entry-level compensation for public school teachers with comparable education. (But these teachers work year-round, not just the school year).
- Every classroom will have three full-time staff assigned, including one full-time, appropriately certified teacher, assistant teacher and teacher aide. Three staff will be available to cover the pre-K day, as appropriate. At least two staff are present at all times.
- The director's qualifications and salary are based on the starting salary for an assistant principal in the public school.
- A full-time social worker, as well as consultants in mental health, health and nutrition are included as core components. (Programs serving primarily at-risk children have a family worker for each class).
- Administrative expenses include secretarial, financial and janitorial services, at 5% of personnel costs.
- The OTPS (non-personnel) expenses for rent and related expenses are based on an assumption of 75 square feet of classroom and ancillary space per child at a cost of \$15 per square foot, plus other non-personnel expenses.¹¹⁵

Costs for the family-home and legally-exempt providers will, of course, be much less than the costs incurred by large child-care centers. The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) determines the specific child-care market rates for each of the different modalities through a survey of providers conducted every two years. The survey methodology and results will be explored next.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

The OCFS Market Rate Survey

To facilitate “equal access” to high-quality child care, the current federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) requires states to conduct a Market Rate Survey of private-pay parent child-care fees every two years. The federal government recommends that states apply a 75th percentile standard to data collected about child-care fees paid by parents to establish ceiling reimbursement rates for child-care subsidies. Establishing ceiling reimbursement rates at the 75th percentile should enable low-income parents to afford about 75% of the child-care programs in their community.

In the new draft CCDBG regulations that the federal Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services (ACF/HHS) published in May, 2013, the agency noted: “The preamble to the 1998 Final Rule indicated that payments established at least at the 75th percentile of the market would be regarded as providing equal access.¹¹⁶ In order to provide access to the highest quality care, even higher payment rates may be necessary.” OCFS, in a memorandum to local commissioners on these surveys, says:

“Payment rates must be sufficient to ensure equal access for [subsidy] eligible families to child-care services comparable to those provided to children whose parents are not eligible to receive assistance under any federal or State child care programs. In addition, market rates must take into account the variations in costs of providing child care in different settings and to children of different age groups as well as the additional cost of providing child care for children with special needs...The standard market rates for legally-exempt family child care and legally-exempt in-home child care providers reflect a 65% differential applied to the market rate established for registered family day care. The enhanced market rates are established at a 70% differential applied to the market rates established for registered family day care.”¹¹⁷

Although the federal government does not currently require states to meet rigorous standards for conducting a provider survey of parent fees, Denise Dowell of CSEA, which has organized home child-care providers in New York State, noted that New York State’s Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) does meet such standards.¹¹⁸ OCFS establishes and requires the vendor that conducts the phone survey to meet standards for representative sampling in order to collect valid and reliable data. A few weeks before the phone survey commences, OCFS mails a “Dear Provider” letter to all licensed, registered and school-age providers explaining the purpose and process. OCFS describes the market rate survey this way in the pre-survey letters it sends to providers: “Every two years, the Office of Children and Family Services conducts a survey of the cost of child care across the

¹¹⁶ 63 FR 39959

¹¹⁷ New York State Office of Family and Children Services. *Local Commissioners Memorandum, 11-OCFS-LCM-12, Child Care Market Rates 2011-2013*, September 30, 2011.

¹¹⁸ Dowell, Denise, CSEA. E-mail to Welfare to Work chair Richard Koubek, March 24, 2014.

various parts of New York State. This information is used to make sure that the rates that the county department of social services pays for child care on behalf of low-income families are consistent with the child-care market in that county.”¹¹⁹

The OCFS provider letter includes a print version of the survey that providers are encouraged to complete in advance of the telephone interview, so they become familiar with the questions in the event s/he is called. The survey vendor conducts a phone survey of randomly sampled providers in five designated New York groups of counties. Suffolk County is in Group 1 with Nassau, Putnam, Rockland, and Westchester, which have similar costs of living and related expenses. Data on parent fees are collected for weekly, daily, part-day and hourly rates for children in designated age groups: 0 to 1 ½; 1 ½ to 3; 3 to 5; 6 to 12. Because the survey is intended to collect information about private-pay parent fees, providers serving only low-income parents receiving child-care subsidies are screened out.

According to Ms. Dowell, “OCFS last conducted the provider Market Rate Survey in spring, 2013. According to a report issued by the National Women’s Law Center last year, New York was one of only three states to meet the federally recommended 75th percentile standard.” In February 2014, OCFS issued a regulation with new market rates expected to go into effect on April 1, 2014—six months later than usual. To establish the 2013 ceiling market rates, for the first time, New York dropped to the 69th percentile, dipping below the standard that the federal government recommends to preserve “equal access” to quality care for low-income parents.¹²⁰



¹¹⁹ OCFS 2013 “Dear Provider” letter

¹²⁰ Dowell. Email, March 24, 2014, Op. cit.

Appendix C contains the Suffolk County market rates, 2014-2015, for each of the child-care modalities by age of the children and hours/days for which the care is provided. The rates vary from a high of \$340 a week for infant care in a child-care center (\$17,680 a year) to \$163 a week for children ages 6-12 in a legally exempt (not licensed or registered) home setting (\$8,476 a year.) *These rates are used to determine DSS reimbursements to child-care providers who care for TANF (welfare) children or working-poor CCBG-subsidized families.* The rates are tailored to Suffolk County and, while not intended by the federal government to measure “true costs” of child care, are an industry yardstick to measure what the “going Suffolk County rate” is for child care in each of the modalities.

One criticism of the Market Rate Survey is that it doesn’t accurately reflect the real cost of care—especially high-quality care. The Market Rate Survey is not intended to do that, nor can it. Market prices (parent fees) are impacted by what parents in the community can afford to pay. Most parents cannot afford to pay the real cost to deliver high-quality child care. The cost of delivering child care in the U.S. has historically been shouldered by the child-care workforce that earns low wages and rarely receives benefits.¹²¹

Janet Walerstein, executive director of the Child Care Council of Suffolk, notes: “While the survey participants may be scientifically selected,” using the random-choice methodology, the participants often do not accurately report their “true costs.” Ms. Walerstein said that this is a particular problem for the home child-care providers, who often do not understand their full costs. Providers not trained in business practices underestimate their costs when they are surveyed, failing to include less obvious expenses such as a portion of their property taxes or utility bills. Some may even consciously underreport their costs so as to remain competitive. And some may keep their costs unrealistically low out of concern for the burden that their tuition places on the working families they serve, with whom many establish close bonds of care and affection for both the parents and the children.¹²² The Child Care Council of Suffolk and CSEA both provide trainings for child-care providers on how to accurately record and report their business costs.

The core point with regard to the OCFS Market Rate Survey is that, even if underreported, the costs of child care are quite high in Suffolk County for the providers, who then must charge high tuitions to the parents. With inadequate support from the county, state and federal governments, these high costs place many child-care providers’ businesses in constant jeopardy and unduly burden parents, especially working-poor parents.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Walerstein, Janet, executive director, Child Care Council of Suffolk. Telephone interview with Richard Koubek, chair, Welfare to Work Commission, March 11, 2014.



Reductions in Government Funding of Child Care

Shea Levin offered this observation in her testimony about our nation’s approach to child care: “American families get little support in paying for child care, compared to families in other rich democracies.”¹²³ Richard Iannuzzi, the then-president of NYSUT, offered a similar observation: “We see data on how Europeans do well in education. They have a mentality on the importance of education and of teachers.”¹²⁴ With an aversion to taxes and social programs of all kinds that far exceeds other industrial democracies, the United States trails in its publicly-funded child-care programs. Chart 7 compares the child-care costs paid out-of-pocket by American parents with a number of other industrial democracies.

Chart 7¹²⁵
Parent Share of Child-Care Costs, By Country

Country	Approximate Parent Share of Child-Care Costs
United States	60%
Australia	31%
France	27% for children 0-3; free for children 3-6
Italy	18% for children 0-3; free for children 3-6
Finland	15%
Germany	14%
Sweden	9%

¹²³ Levin, Ibid.

¹²⁴ Iannuzzi, Op. cit.

¹²⁵ Every Child Matters. *Homeland Insecurity: Why New Investments in Children and Youth Must be a Priority for Candidates*, 2012, p. 16.

In February 2014, the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) released a report on government child-care spending that “paints a bleak picture of a program intended to support low-income parents’ economic opportunity and their children’s development,” concluding that federal spending in 2012 was at a ten-year low. The CLASP report’s findings are summarized in Chart 8.

Chart 8
Reductions in U.S. Child-Care Spending¹²⁶

Child care assistance spending in 2012 fell to a 10-year low.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total spending on child care assistance—including combined child care and TANF [welfare] funds—was \$11.4 billion, the lowest level since 2002. • Spending within [the federal] Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) fell to the lowest level since 2002. • Federal TANF funds used for child care fell to the lowest level since 1998.
The number of children receiving CCDBG-funded child care fell to a 14-year low.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A monthly average of 1.5 million children received CCDBG-funded child care, the smallest number of children served since 1998. • About 263,000 fewer children received CCDBG-funded child care in 2012 than in 2006.
Total combined child care spending (including federal and state CCDBG and TANF [welfare] funds fell from \$12.9 billion in 2011 to \$11.4 billion in 2012, the most recent year for which data are available. This was the lowest level of spending since 2002. While the bulk of the decline was the result of decreased spending in CCDBG, spending reductions in the TANF program in 2012 and in previous years contributed significantly.
<p>Total spending in 2012 included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$8.6 billion in state and federal CCDBG funds; • \$1.2 billion in federal TANF funds spent directly on child care; and • \$1.6 billion in additional state TANF MOE [Maintenance of Effort—the state’s contribution].

The CLASP report concluded that only one state, Delaware, increased spending by more than 20%. A total of 38 states spent less on child care assistance in 2012 compared to the previous year. New York was one of seven states that decreased spending by 20-29%, the others being: California; Louisiana; Maine; Michigan; New Jersey and New Mexico. Three states decreased spending by more than 30%: Georgia; North Dakota; and South Carolina.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Matthews, Hanna and Stephanie Schmit. *Child Care Assistance Spending and Participation in 2012—A Record Low*. CLASP, February, 2014

¹²⁷ Ibid.

Federal CCDBG funds support New York State's Child Care Block Grant (CCBG), which, as noted several times above, provides child care for children in the welfare system as well as a subsidy to help working-poor parents pay for their child care. Thus, every dollar in federal CCDBG funding that is reduced places a burden on New York State's CCBG program and ultimately on Suffolk County.

New York State's Flawed CCBG Formula

As the commission reported in the 2012 "Struggling in Suburbia" Suffolk poverty report as well as in several previous child-care reports, Suffolk County has been penalized by the New York State formula used to determine each county's Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) allocation. In a January, 2014 letter from DSS Commissioner John O'Neill to Acting OCFS Commissioner Sheila Poole, Commissioner O'Neill pointed out that Suffolk lost over \$5 million dollars in CCBG funds between 2006 and 2012.¹²⁸ These State CCBG reductions compound the federal CCDBG reductions described above and have had an extremely negative impact on Suffolk's working-poor parents, who need the CCBG subsidy to help pay their burdensome child-care costs.

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) funds Suffolk County's child-care programs. About 75% of these funds are directed to families who are required to receive child care, such as recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF - welfare), the number of whom increased dramatically during the Great Recession. The remaining 25% of CCBG funds are directed at helping working-poor parents pay for child-care services. Yet, as Commissioner O'Neill reported, during the Great Recession, CCBG funds for Suffolk County's child-care program were cut by over \$5 million. These CCBG reductions took place while the Suffolk County Department of Social Services increased the number of children served from 3,627 in 2009 to more than 5,900 in 2011. Part of this dramatic increase in the number of children served was the result of a DSS decision to apply federal American Relief and Recovery Act (ARRA) stimulus funds to meet the actual demand for child care in Suffolk, a decision that had negative consequences, which will be discussed below.¹²⁹

As a result of the CCBG reductions, DSS was forced in 2012 to devastate many working-poor families who rely on the CCBG subsidy by:

- Increasing the amount of the child-care co-payments parents must contribute from 15% to 30% of the child-care costs;
- Decreasing the child-care subsidy eligibility level for working-poor families from 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to 100% of the FPL, which in 2012 was \$23,050 for a family of four;
- Eliminating subsidized child care for 2,254 children of working-poor families in 2012;
- Closing the subsidized child-care program to any new working-poor families.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ O'Neill, John, commissioner, SCDSS. Letter to Sheila Poole, acting commissioner, New York State Office of Children and Family Services, January 24, 2014.

¹²⁹ *Struggling in Suburbia*, Op. cit.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

The commission, as noted above, reported in “Struggling in Suburbia” that 200% of Federal Poverty Level (\$47,100 for a family of four in 2014) is the “true” poverty level for Long Island.

OCFS based the CCBG reductions on an allocations formula that penalized SCDSS for using federal stimulus ARRA funds to increase Suffolk’s subsidized child-care rolls, despite being authorized to do so in Local Commissioners Memoranda 09-OCFS-LCM-14 and 10-OCFS-LCM-14, issued in 2009 and again in 2010. The outdated OCFS formula applies a four-year average of CCBG fund usage by a county to determine its current CCBG allocation. It thereby did not take into account the use of ARRA stimulus funds, which OCFS authorized to meet the actual demand for child care in Suffolk County.¹³¹

In 2013, Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone, with DSS, was able to add \$3.5 million in funds to child care, due to a decrease in the number of TANF recipients of child care. With OCFS adding almost \$995,000 to the Suffolk CCBG allocation for 2013-2014, DSS was able to restore eligibility for the child-care subsidy to 150% of FPL, add 1,058 children to the subsidized child-care rolls since February 2013 and lower the family co-pay from 30% to 20%. On June 13, 2014, County Executive Bellone announced that eligibility for the child-care subsidy will be raised to 165% of FPL effective July 1, 2014. As Commissioner O’Neill stated in his letter, however, DSS is “currently serving 2,392 non-Temporary Assistance children [i.e., children in working-poor families], 1,386 (37%) fewer than the 3,778 children served in January 2012,” when the eligibility for the child-care subsidy was last at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.¹³²

Having documented in his letter Suffolk’s changing demographics, including a rise in the immigrant population, as well as a significant increase in low-income families, Commissioner O’Neill went on to again request a change in the CCBG funding formula:

“The methodology currently in use is based on the average level of annual child-care claims for the prior four federal fiscal years, as well as the rollover of unspent NYS CCBG funds. This simplistic methodology does not account for districts' differential need for subsidized child care services, based on the changing demographics of its residents through time, with some districts experiencing a disproportionate increase in the number and percentage of low-income families and children...The current methodology also fails to take into account increases to the cost of child care (i.e. property taxes and utilities), which could be disproportionate across districts and reduces the number of children that can be served at the same funding level. Additionally, it penalizes districts that cannot quickly increase their child-care caseload and concomitant expenditure levels in response to an increase in its CCBG allocation or other time-limited funds. This results in districts under spending their CCBG allocation, as...happened in Suffolk during

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² O’Neill OCFS letter, Op. cit.

federal fiscal years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011, when the county worked to maximize use of time-limited federal ARRA funds.”¹³³

Despite Commissioner O’Neill’s appeal, OCFS has not altered its CCBG allocation formula and, in May, 2014, announced that Suffolk’s 2014-2015 allocation would be \$31,364,169, an increase of only \$580,725 or 1.9% over the previous year. This allocation is below the estimated \$40 million needed to cover the actual demand for child care in the Suffolk and well below Nassau County’s CCBG allocation increase of almost \$9 million or 25.6%, despite a comparable if not greater demand for subsidized child care in Suffolk.

However, As *Newsday* reported on June 2, 2014, “Last year, Nassau contributed \$23.5 million to the program, and Suffolk provided \$3 million.”¹³⁴ It is possible that the differential in the CCBG allocation for Nassau County may be due to Nassau’s larger contribution of county funds for child care, thereby opening up additional child-care enrollments which are a factor used in the CCBG allocation formula. The reasons for the difference in the Nassau and Suffolk County contributions to child care are unclear and will be explored in detail by the commission and reported to the legislature following release of this report.

Suffolk’s CCBG Funding Cuts: The Human Toll

As noted above, Keesha Bailey earns \$33,072 a year. She told her November 2013 focus group that, when Suffolk County’s CCBG child-care subsidy funding was cut, she lost her subsidy because her gross income was \$8 over the new eligibility standard. She appealed the decision by filing a fair hearing, which took a number of months to adjudicate. During the hearing process, Ms. Bailey continued to receive her child-care subsidy. When she lost the fair hearing, DSS charged her \$17,000 for the subsidies she had received during the fair hearing. She is currently paying this off at \$50.00 a week. Such rigid child-care subsidy regulations, Ms. Bailey concluded, “are forcing people to work fewer hours or not to work at all.”¹³⁵ Keishya Coltrain, a family child-care provider who participated in a November 15 focus group, spoke about one of her parents who also was cut off from the subsidy because she earned \$21 over the eligibility limit. She pointed out that this mother’s income varies because she works on commissions, which make her income and her eligibility constantly fluctuate. Another family provider in this focus group, Roxanne Savage, spoke for the others when she said about the loss of the subsidy, “In other countries, child care is provided by the government. I feel awful to see how they struggle.”¹³⁶ Cheryl Keshner reported above on the negative impacts these CCBG cuts had on immigrant families.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Figuerora, Laura. “Amid Child-Care Gap, Suffolk Calls For Change,” *Newsday*, June 2, 2014.

¹³⁵ *Bailey, Op. cit.*

¹³⁶ Coltrain, Keishya and Roxanne Savage. Statements at the family child care providers’ focus group, CSEA, Commack, November 15, 2013.

Kathleen Roche, executive director of Rainbow Chimes Early Education Center in Huntington, passionately described the impact the CCBG cuts had on the families whose children are enrolled in her center:

“Over the past year and a half, New York State’s child-care funding cuts wreaked the worst havoc ever on low-income families in Suffolk County. The attack on our working-poor was unprecedented, arbitrary and shameful....The Office of Children and Family Services made the inequitable decision that caused 2,000 children in this county to lose their early education and child care. Every one of these children suffered, and their families were put at such financial risk that many were forced on welfare or were forced to leave their children in substandard types of care. I consider this act by OCFS to be a terrible betrayal of our county’s children.”¹³⁷

Cheryl Keshner, senior paralegal/community advocate for the Empire Justice Center, works with many low-income families. She described the impact of the CCBG cuts:

“I spoke personally with many of these families whose lives were thrown into complete turmoil as a result of these cutbacks. The overwhelming majority were single-parent households, and of these, a very large percentage were Latino immigrants working long hours at low wages. The sudden discontinuation of services severely disrupted these families’ lives. They faced a difficult choice: spend all their money on the providers they trusted, but not have enough left for the rent and other necessities; find someone else to care for their children who did not have proper experience or training, or give up their jobs so they could stay at home to care for their children...The vast majority tried to ‘make do’ by shuttling their child from a family member to a neighbor to a friend or an acquaintance, or even sending the child back to their home country, all the while worrying whether or not their children were being properly cared for and were safe. This created tremendous instability for these parents and their children.”¹³⁸

These troubling circumstances, which were a direct outgrowth of the 2012 CCBG cuts to Suffolk County, represent all that is wrong with child-care in America; they too often are the furthest thing from the safe, quality child care that is now being trumpeted by government officials, educators and advocates across the nation. It is the commission’s hope that OCFS will at long last adjust the CCBG funding formula as recommended by Commissioner O’Neill, so that Suffolk will receive an allocation that meets the actual demand for child care in this county, and so that no parent and child will again experience the wrenching disruptions that occurred in 2012.

UPK: A New Hope for Quality and Access, But Who Will Pay?

On January 30, 2014, *The New York Times* took the unusual editorial step of devoting three of four Op-ed columns to UPK. As Gail Collins wrote in her column, “pre-kindergarten is so in”

¹³⁷ Roche, Kathleen, executive director, Rainbow Chimes Early Education Center. Testimony at the December 2 Welfare to Work Commission early learning and child care hearing.

¹³⁸ Keshner, Op. cit.

that even President Obama, House Speaker John Boehner and Representative Paul Ryan all support it—a rarity in Washington’s divided political climate. But, she noted, “Early education is one of the best tools for breaking the poverty-to-poverty trap. Unfortunately, it only works if it is high quality, and high quality is expensive.”¹³⁹

As noted above, both New York State Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio have called for Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK.) New York State Education Commissioner John B. King estimated that full-day prekindergarten for every four-year-old would cost about \$1.6 billion if fully implemented, which is three times the amount Governor Cuomo proposed. Mayor de Blasio, who proposed funding the city’s UPK with a dedicated tax on households earning more than \$500,000 a year, estimated that the program would cost \$340 million in the first year.¹⁴⁰ Governor Cuomo opposes a tax hike to fund UPK. During the drafting of this report, *The New York Times* reported that the State Senate had agreed to provide \$540 million to fund New York City’s UPK program with the caveat that this funding would be “instead of a tax increase on wealthy residents.” *The Times* also pointed out that the governor “has offered to finance full-day prekindergarten, all around the New York, with state money, but his budget plan included only \$100 million for the next year in all school districts.”¹⁴¹ The governor’s long-term UPK plan “proposed a total of \$1.5 billion in state funding over five years, beginning with “\$100 million the first year and ending with \$500 million in the fifth year.”¹⁴² As finally adopted, the 2014-15 New York State budget provides \$300 million to New York City for UPK and \$40 million for the rest of the state’s UPK programs.¹⁴³

Given the federal government’s reductions in child-care funding reported above and the general lack of government commitment to early learning and child care in this country, compared with other industrial democracies, the issue of who will pay for the currently popular UPK initiative is central to this report.

As Gail Collins wrote, “A quarter of the youngest Americans are poor. We need to get to them quickly, and do the job right, well before they are four.” She added, “If the programs are good, middle-class parents are rightfully going to point out that they need help too.” And then she cut to the quick:

“It’ll be a huge number of kids, and the classes have to be really small [to ensure quality.] Also, the teachers have to get much better pay. They go into the business out of love, but when you are talking about median salaries of \$27,000 a year (for pre-K

¹³⁹ Collins, Op. cit.

¹⁴⁰ Roy, Yancey. *Official: Pre-K to Cost \$1.6b*, *Newsday*, January 29, 2014.

¹⁴¹ Kaplan, Thomas and Al Baker. “Mayor Closes in on Pre-K Funding, But Not From a Higher Tax,” *New York Times*, Marc 14, 2014.

¹⁴² Roy, Op. cit.

¹⁴³ Kaplan, Thomas and Javier Hernandez. “State Budget Deal Reached; \$300 Million for New York City Pre-K,” *New York Times*, March 29, 2014.

teachers] sometimes love is not enough. All in all, we are talking about a ton of money.”¹⁴⁴

With the average salary for a public school teacher in New York State about \$72,000 a year¹⁴⁵, the discrepancy in pay for preschool teachers is striking. Richard Iannuzzi of NYSUT clearly stated the funding implications for raising preschool teachers’ salaries and creating quality UPK education when he testified on December 2:

“We need a new financing strategy that recognizes prekindergarten as an essential educational service....To accomplish this, the increased investment in [preschool education] must be incorporated into the general state education finance system that now covers K-12 education. State aid for prekindergarten programs should be incorporated into the K-12 education finance system.”¹⁴⁶

Mr. Iannuzzi also testified about the need for New York State to mandate full-day kindergarten for all children. “We are asking state policymakers to advocate for lowering the mandatory attendance age [from six] to five, in order to ensure that all children attend full-day kindergarten.” He also noted that the Board of Regents unsuccessfully called for mandatory full-day kindergarten in 2008, and he asked them to “reengage on this proposal and seek funding for this” in the state budget.¹⁴⁷

But the public’s and the governor’s aversion to tax increases, coupled with the 2% property tax/spending cap the state enacted, could result in a situation where state funding to expand UPK might draw away funds from public school districts’ K-12 programs. Currently, 7,100 or 4% of New York State’s kindergartners (outside of New York City) are in half-day kindergarten. According to a *New York Times* report, “it would cost an estimated \$77 million to bring full-day kindergarten to all districts now offering only half-day programs.” The Shenendehowa School District, outside Saratoga, has 568 children in half-day kindergarten. As Dr. L. Oliver Robinson, Shenendehowa’s superintendent, said about UPK, “It’s comical to skip over the first step, which is solidifying [full-day] kindergarten.” *The Times* report also profiled Huntington, which eliminated full-day kindergarten in 2011 for financial reasons. Noting that many families moved to Huntington for its schools, *The Times* observed that “howls from parents have not stopped.”¹⁴⁸ As noted above, Huntington voters restored full-day kindergarten when they adopted the school district budget on May 20, 2014. Nine Long Island school districts continue to provide only half-day kindergarten.

Overall, with all the lofty calls for UPK, there remains much uncertainty about how much it will cost to provide a quality program that is comparable to public-education programs. Even more uncertain is how this major expansion of educational services will be funded, especially in New York State, where the governor and legislature have resisted tax increases across the board,

¹⁴⁴ Collins, Op. cit.

¹⁴⁵ <http://www.teacherportal.com/teacher-salaries-by-state/>

¹⁴⁶ Iannuzzi, Op. cit.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Baker, Al. “Need for Full-Day Kindergarten Lost in Pre-K Debate, Critics Say,” *New York Times*, March 7, 2014.

rejected tax increases for the wealthy, and enacted a 2% property tax/spending cap. Since property taxes provide most of the funding for public schools in New York State, the future of UPK will hinge on where and how funding will be found to finance a quality program. Aside from the short and long-term benefits to children and society discussed above, one major but often overlooked reason for funding quality child care and early learning are the benefits accrued to the local economy, which will be discussed next.

Quality Child Care and Early Learning: The Benefits to Long Island's Economy

As reported above, in October 2012, the commission reported to the Suffolk County Legislature on the economic impacts that resulted from DSS lowering the subsidized child-care eligibility for working-poor families from 200% to 100% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL), due to the state's cuts in Suffolk's Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) allocation. During the summer of 2012, the commission surveyed licensed child-care centers in Suffolk County to determine the impact of the OCFS funding reductions on their businesses. Below is a summary of the survey results of the nine child-care centers that responded:

- Children cut from their programs: 345
- Loss in revenue for 2012: \$2.5 million
- Staff laid off: 64
- Loss of staff salaries: \$1.6 million
- Salary freezes or possible cuts: 6 centers

The report concluded that a conservative extrapolation of the data suggested that the 2,200 children removed from subsidized child care in 2012 as a result of the CCBG funding reduction could lead to about 400 child-care staff layoffs, countywide. At the living wage rate then in effect in Suffolk County, \$10.50 an hour, these 400 layoffs could cost Suffolk County over \$10 million in lost wages in 2012.¹⁴⁹

Ten years ago, in 2004, the Rauch Foundation, in cooperation with the Child Care Council of Suffolk, published a seminal study titled, "The Child-Care Industry: An Integral Part of Long Island's Economy." This study is currently being updated by the Long Island Association. Its core findings however, remain relevant and reveal a great deal about why it makes structural fiscal and economic sense to fund quality child care and early learning on Long Island and elsewhere.

The study's core conclusion was that, "in addition to the jobs and economic activity generated by the industry itself, child care makes it possible for thousands of Long Island parents to work, draws additional federal and state dollars into the local economy and has regional economic linkages that are greater than many other Long Island industries." The report documented these collective

¹⁴⁹ Welfare to Work Commission. The Negative Impacts of State Reductions in Child-Care Funding on the Suffolk County Economy, Op. cit.

economic impacts that child care and early learning had on the Long Island economy in 2004, which can be reasonably assumed, are even greater in 2014 when adjusted for inflation:¹⁵⁰

- A \$612 million dollar industry
- Almost 2,600 small businesses
- Approximately 17,000 employees
- Over 74,000 children enrolled

Noting the ripple economic effects of an industry as large as child care, the report pointed out “the economic importance of Long Island’s child-care industry extends beyond the number of individuals directly employed and the revenue of the industry. As child-care businesses and their employees spend money in the Long Island economy, they collectively stimulate economic activity in other industries.” Among child care’s economic multiplier effects identified by the report were:

- Indirect effects, which are a measure of how much economic activity is stimulated by child-care businesses when they purchase goods and services from local suppliers.
- Induced effects, which are a measure of how much economic activity is generated by child-care workers when they use their wages to purchase goods and services from local businesses.

The report concluded that “the Long Island child-care industry has an output multiplier of 1.92—which is larger than that of most other Long Island industries. This means the child-care industry’s linkages to Long Island’s regional economy are stronger and more significant than many other industries. This is due in part to the fact that child-care industry purchases are geographically concentrated on the Long Island region and tend to be local.”¹⁵¹

As reported earlier, it has been estimated that every dollar spent on child care generates a \$7 return to the local economy. The Rauch report estimated an even greater return, building on this basic \$7 multiplier:

“Local Long Island tax dollars spent on child care draw a large amount of federal and state dollars into Long Island’s economy. This funding ripples through the economy in much the same way as the dollars generated by attracting new businesses. In 2001, Long Island spent about \$6 million in local funds for child care. These funds helped to leverage an additional \$58.9 million in state and federal subsidy funds—almost \$10 for every \$1 invested. Each of these state and federal dollars generates \$1.92 in the larger Long Island economy resulting in a total leverage and linkage of almost \$19.”¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Stoney, Louise, Mildred Warner, Ph.D. and Keri Klockowski. *The Child-Care Industry: An Integral Part of Long Island’s Economy*, The Rauch Foundation, The Child Care Council of Suffolk, The Child Care Council of Nassau, 2004, p. 3.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

In the context of the additional New York State funding required for early-childhood education cited above, using the more conservative \$1 to \$7 ratio, the \$77 million required to have every New York child in a full-day kindergarten program would yield \$539 million. Using the Rauch report's \$1 to \$19 ratio, the \$77 million investment in full-day kindergarten would yield a return of \$1.5 billion. Similarly, the \$1.6 billion estimate for New York State to provide UPK would yield a return of from \$11.2 billion to \$30 billion, depending on which ratio is applied. These economic benefits do not include the long-term societal benefits that accrue from investing in quality child care and early learning discussed earlier, such as higher high school graduation rates, which yield more college admissions as well as higher lifetime earnings and lower criminal justice costs.

When viewed as long-term economic and social investments, the short-term increases in government funding for quality child care and early learning more than pay for themselves. The discussion that needs to take place by both the public and government policymakers is whether this country, state and county have the political will, the courage and the foresight to make the kinds of fiscal decisions needed for these programs now in order to yield billions in both private and public dollars and benefits tomorrow, while improving the quality of the life for New York's children and their families.

Are We Serious About Preschoolers?

In October, 2013, *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof wrote that UPK is "one of those rare initiatives that polls well across the spectrum, with support from 84% of Democrats and 60% of Republicans in a recent national survey." The commission believes this is the moment to act so that preschool education can be raised to the levels of quality that Americans demand of our public schools, grades K-12. Citing "mountains of research," Kristof focused on quality early educational interventions as "the best way to address American economic inequality, poverty and crime." He starkly laid out the challenge:

"Look, we'll have to confront the pathologies of poverty at some point. We can deal with them cheaply at the front end, in infancy. Or we can wait and jail a troubled adolescent at the tail end. To some extent, we face a choice between investing in preschoolers or in prisons."¹⁵³

The commission, by its mission and legislative charge, is called to address the needs of poor and working-poor Long Islanders. The commission believes, therefore, that Nicholas Kristof makes a compelling case for Suffolk County action to fight poverty by raising the quality of early learning and child care now, before we have to pay so much more later for expensive incarceration. The commission further supports the conclusions of those experts reported above who see a societal investment in early learning and quality child care yielding other long-term benefits, such as stimulation of the Suffolk economy, reductions in public assistance, homelessness, higher high school graduation rates, more college admissions and higher lifetime earnings. The commission also

¹⁵³ Kristof, Nicholas. "Do We Invest in Preschools or Prisons?" *New York Times*, October 27, 2013.

believes that government investment in early learning and quality child care will help middle-class children as well, whose families struggle to find and afford quality child care, also with long-term benefits to the larger society. But doing so will be expensive, requiring increased federal and state funding, as well as additional county commitments.

Whether this funding accompanies the current support for preschool education remains to be seen. We do know that, where government commits to quality preschool education, it gets done, as in Oklahoma, where “every four-year old gets free access to a year of high-quality pre-kindergarten. Even younger children from disadvantaged homes often get access to full-day, year-round nursery school, and some families get home visits to coach parents on reading and talking more with their children.”¹⁵⁴ As pediatrician Dina Lieser summarized quality preschool education, “The benefits of quality child care are so well documented that if it were a serum it would be a required inoculation.”¹⁵⁵ What follows are realistic and practical actions the commission believes Suffolk County can and must take now to raise the quality and accessibility of child care and preschool education.



¹⁵⁴ Kristof, Nicholas. “Oklahoma! Where the Kids Learn Early,” *New York Times*, November 10, 2013.

¹⁵⁵ Lieser, Op. cit.

Part IV
Opportunities: Recommendations for Suffolk County Government
to Meet the Challenges and Create Opportunities
for Quality Child Care and Early Learning

"We know [quality early learning] works. So let's do what works and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind." President Barack Obama, 2013 State of the Union Message

The Macro Challenges: Growing Interest but Inadequate Resources

The lead story in *The New York Times* on May 1, 2014 ran under the headline, "Changed Life of the Poor: Better Off, but Far Behind." In it, *The Times* reported that, due to a sharp decline in the cost of many consumer products, such as televisions or computer devices or even clothing, "more products are in the reach" of America's poor people while, many "services...are not." For example, when adjusted for inflation, there has been almost a 20% decline in the price of clothing since 2005, but an almost 20% increase in the cost of child care. The report noted that "child care...remains only a small sliver of consumption of poor families because it is simply too expensive." Further, *The Times* noted, in many cases, it depressed the earnings of women who have no choice but to give up hours working to stay at home."¹⁵⁶ It is the commission's belief that, while less severe, the rising costs of child care are also negatively impacting middle-class families.



¹⁵⁶ Lowery, Annie. "Changed Life of the Poor: Better Off But Far Behind," *New York Times*, May 5, 2014.

The Commission welcomes the apparent national momentum toward expanding and improving quality child care and early learning, evidenced by:

1. The White House Early Learning initiative.
2. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services development of more stringent national child-care and early-learning standards, scheduled for implementation later in 2014.
3. New York State's move toward full-day Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) for all four-year-old children, by funding \$340 million for UPK in the 2014-15 State budget (\$300 million for New York City; \$40 million for the rest of the state) and the state's plan to implement full-day UPK for all four-year-olds throughout New York within five years.
4. Suffolk County DSS actions to limit administrative barriers that impede access to quality child-care programs for working-poor families, such as:
 - Now requiring one-year, rather than six-month, recertification for working-poor families receiving New York State Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) subsidized child care.
 - Restoring the eligibility for subsidized child care from 100% to 165% of the Federal Poverty level.
 - Reducing the parent co-pay for CCBG subsidized child care from 30% to 20%.
 - Exploring how to expand and encourage an online eligibility check and application process for subsidized child care.
5. The soon-to-be released Long Island Association/Child Care Council update of the 2004 report on the economic impacts of child care on the Long Island economy.

The commission fully understands that the success of both the federal and state early-learning and child-care initiatives will depend on how much funding is provided for them. For example, as noted above in this report, while the new federal child-care regulations will enhance the quality of services, if the federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is not increased, these new regulations could actually lead to a decline in the number of children served by the state's CCBG-funded services in Suffolk. Similarly, if New York's UPK initiative is not adequately funded, this initiative will also fail to improve both access to and the quality of the services that have been promised.

Despite the growing national interest in early learning, child care and preschool education, the commission found a number of disturbing barriers to quality programs in Suffolk County. Many of these barriers are rooted in the lack of adequate funding by both the federal and state governments identified repeatedly throughout this report, as well as deep-rooted structural impediments, such as multiple funding streams that foster a divided, competitive delivery system. Most of these macro-barriers are beyond the purview of the Suffolk County government.

The Commission was deeply disturbed to learn in May of 2014 that the **New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) has again utilized its flawed CCBG formula to essentially flat-fund the Suffolk CCBG program for 2014-2015 at \$31,364,169 which represents an increase of only \$580,725 or 1.9% over the previous year, well below the estimated \$40 million needed to cover the actual demand for child care in the Suffolk and below the State increase in CCBG funds of 7.4%.** As reported above, last year Suffolk demonstrated its commitment to helping the

working poor by increasing the income limit for subsidize child care from 100% to 150% of the FPL and lowering the parent fee from 30% to 20% and, on July 1, 2014, will raise the eligibility to 165% FPL.

Of note is the OCFS/CCBG allocation to Nassau County which was increased by almost \$9 million or 25.6%, despite a comparable if not greater need and demand for subsidized child care in Suffolk.¹⁵⁷ As noted above, one reason for the larger Nassau County CCBG allocation may be the significantly larger county contribution to child care (\$23.5 million in Nassau vs. \$3 million in Suffolk) which provides for larger Nassau County child-care enrollments and possibly the larger CCBG allocation which is based on enrollments. The commission is exploring the reasons for the differential in Nassau and Suffolk contributions to the child-care program, which it will report to the legislature following release of this report. A full comparison of the CCBG allocations can be found in Appendix D below.

Despite these problems and setbacks, the commission believes that there are affordable and specific actions that Suffolk County can take now, to mitigate the following barriers to quality child care and early learning identified by the commission:

1. The lack of a coordinated child-care/early-learning delivery system.
2. The lack of consensus about what constitutes quality child care and early learning.
3. Inadequate government funding of child care.

What follow are the commission's recommendations for action by Suffolk County to address these barriers.

Micro Opportunities: Recommendations for Action in Suffolk

The Commission understands that Suffolk County government cannot lift the macro barriers to quality early learning and child care. But the Commission also believes that Suffolk County government can take small, incremental, non-budget-busting steps to improve both access to and the quality of child care and early learning. These recommended county actions are presented as responses to each of the three barriers identified above. The commission believes the recommendations are fiscally responsible: Some of the actions require county advocacy with state officials; some call for the creation of nonbudget county entities; a few will require modest increases in county investments in quality child care and early learning.

Barrier 1: The Lack of a Coordinated Child-Care/Early-Learning Delivery System

Problem to be Addressed: Suffolk County has no single department or agency charged with coordinating child care and early learning services and programs, thereby fostering a disconnected network of programmatic silos.

¹⁵⁷ New York State Office of Children and Family Services, *CCBG SFY 2013-2014 to SFY 2014-2015 Comparison*. Email from DSS Commissioner John O'Neill to Welfare to Work Commission John O'Neill, May 12, 2014.

Recommendations:

1. The county executive and/or the legislature should convene a **forum to consider a countywide coordinating agency for all child-care and early-learning programs** (Possible invitees: Department of Social Services (DSS), which administers CCBG-funded child care for TANF (welfare) families and subsidies for working-poor families; the Department of Health Services (DOHS), which administers and oversees child care for special-needs children; the Department of Labor (DOL), which provides child care referrals for TANF recipients assigned to work activities; BOCES, which provides staff development for public school teachers; NYS United Teachers (NYSUT), the union that represents public school teachers; the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA), the union that represents family-home child-care providers; the Child Care Council of Suffolk, which is the community-based umbrella organization for child-care services in Suffolk; the Welfare to Work Commission; the Long Island office of the state's Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS); child-care providers, and public school administrators in districts that provide UPK.

2. The legislature should create a **Suffolk County Child-Care/Early-Learning Commission** to recommend policies and procedures for developing a coordinated, quality child-care/early-learning delivery system. The commission should be charged with:
 - Securing data and creating a data repository on the status of Suffolk County child care and early learning. These data should be secured from DSS, DOHS, DOL, Long Island OCFS, the Child Care Council of Suffolk, Head Start and Suffolk public school districts. The data should be provided as requested to the commission, the county legislature, and the Welfare to Work Commission. Among the data that might be collected on an annual basis and compared over time are:
 - The number of inquiries made for child care;
 - The number of TANF and working-poor families whose children receive DSS/CCBG child care;
 - The number of Suffolk children in licensed and registered child-care settings;
 - The number of children in legally-exempt (informal) child care;
 - The number of children in UPK and Head Start;
 - The costs of child care, early learning and the funding sources and funding shortfalls (e.g., CCBG, Head Start; UPK);
 - Wait lists;
 - The placements of special needs children.

 - Creating a **model “school district shared services” pilot** in one public-school district that will include coordinated child-care and early-learning services within and among the public and private schools in that district, including: UPK programs, community-based organizations (CBOs) such as churches and libraries and local child-care providers.

- Coordinating Suffolk child-care policies with the County’s economic-development plans and programs.
- Encouraging the coordination of child-care and early-childhood educational services by school districts and CBOs, to overcome barriers such as the lack of transportation to and from wraparound services (UPK before and after care) as well as the need for full-year services for preschool children who are in UPK.

Problem to be addressed: DSS administers child care funds for about 4,000 children through the CCBG subsidy – including TANF recipients (families relying on temporary public assistance or what is commonly referred to as “welfare”) and working-poor parents receiving the CCBG subsidy. DSS estimates that the children receiving DSS child care represent about 10% to 15% of all children receiving child care in Suffolk. But the TANF and working-poor families are a particularly fragile population that would be helped by removing bureaucratic frustrations to their securing quality child care.¹⁵⁸

Recommendations:

1. DSS should explore creating with OCFS a **tiered eligibility standard for subsidized child-care** that phases out the CCBG subsidy as parents increase their earnings, rather than eliminating the subsidy entirely when they cross the income threshold, as is the current OCFS requirement.
2. DSS should explore procedures to facilitate and **expedite direct communication between child-care providers and DSS child-care eligibility workers** regarding the needs of individual children and their families. Similar procedures were adopted by DSS in 2012, at the recommendation of the commission, to facilitate communication between nonprofit agency case managers and DSS case workers regarding the needs of individual clients.

Barrier 2: The Lack of Consensus about What Constitutes Quality Child Care and Early Learning

Problem to be addressed: While the health and safety practices of licensed and registered child-care providers are strictly regulated by OCFS, there is a need for more oversight of the quality of the educational programs in child-care settings. Too often, the public and policymakers dismiss child-care and preschool programs as “babysitting”.

Recommendations:

1. The legislature and county executive should advocate with Suffolk State legislators and the Governor **for increased QUALITYstarsNY funding** to expand its utilization in Suffolk County.

¹⁵⁸ Nowak, Dennis. Division Administrator, Suffolk DSS, Family & Children's Services/Adult Protective Services, Comments at the May 7 Child Care Committee of the Welfare to Work Commission.

2. The legislature and county executive should encourage OCFS to **build staff development into funding/cost reimbursement practices** for child-care and early-learning providers.
3. The newly-created Suffolk County Child-Care/Early-Learning Commission should:
 - Establish County recommendations to providers for evidence-based curricula.
 - Recommend qualitative, observation-based evaluation measures and standards to assess preschool children’s progress.
 - Work with the Suffolk County Department of Health to improve County-wide standards and procedures for early diagnosis and intervention strategies for children with special needs.
 - Engage parents and businesses to advocate for quality child care.
4. The County should fund the proposed Child-Care/Early-Learning Commission to create **public service announcements** to educate the community on the importance of quality early-learning and child-care experiences and to debunk the myth that such experiences are “babysitting.”

Barrier 3: Inadequate Government Funding of Child Care

Problem to be addressed: OCFS continues to use a CCBG funding formula that penalizes Suffolk County by not factoring into the formula the actual demand for child care in Suffolk, thereby causing serious restrictions in the number of working-poor families whose children can receive the CCBG subsidy. The current eligibility for the subsidy, which, effective July 1, 2014, is 165% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), should be restored, at a minimum, to 200% of the FPL, which is what the Commission and others have defined as the actual poverty level for Suffolk County (\$47,700 for a family of four in 2014.)

Recommendations:

1. The legislature and county executive must continue to advocate with the governor and OCFS for **additional state funds for child care** and to **change the State’s CCBG formula**, which consistently underfunds Suffolk’s block grant allocation so that the allocation meets the actual demand for child care for families earning 200% of FPL (\$40 million compared with the \$31 million allocated in 2014.)
2. The legislature in partnership with the county executive should **significantly increase county funds for child care, as Nassau County apparently does, and assess the contributions Suffolk has made in the past**, with emphasis on incrementally expanding the number of children in working-poor families earning up to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$47,700 for a family of four in 2014) who can receive the child-care subsidy.

Problem to be addressed: New York State mandates neither kindergarten nor full-day kindergarten. In addition, State funding for UPK remains uncertain, despite the growing interest in this early-learning initiative.

Recommendations:

1. The legislature and county executive should urge Suffolk's state legislators to **include early learning in the state's public-school funding for local school district budgets.**
2. The legislature and county executive should urge the New York State Board of Regents to re-engage their 2008 proposal to create **mandatory full-day kindergarten** in New York State, thereby lowering the mandatory school attendance age from six to five.

Problem to be addressed: With the county still in deficit, and the state reluctant to raise taxes to support early learning or child care, other revenues need to be found to support quality programs.

Recommendations:

1. The Suffolk County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) should **use a company's support for child care as one criterion for awarding that company an IDA grant or tax abatement.** Support might include:
 - Child-care subsidies for low-wage workers;
 - In-kind assistance (e.g., playground equipment) to child care providers used by workers, in return for parents receiving tuition discounts.
2. The County, in collaboration with the National Association of Mothers' Centers, should **promote in Suffolk the Alfred P. Sloan Award for Business Excellence and Workplace Flexibility.** This award recognizes employers that are successfully using flexibility to meet both business and employee's family goals and needs. Award winners get County and regional visibility.
3. The legislature and county executive should consider establishing a **Suffolk County Children's Trust Fund**, through which individuals and corporations would be awarded a tax incentive for contributing to this fund. The fund would address unmet needs of preschool children. Examples of such unmet needs might include, but will not be limited to:
 - Bus transportation for UPK children who require wraparound care, i.e., after-school or before-school care.
 - Suffolk subsidies for working-poor parents who earn more than the 165% Federal Poverty Level eligibility for the CCBG subsidy.

Conclusion: A Time to Listen and to Act

“I find it hard to talk about early-care and education issues without crying or being angry,” said Lynda Parmely, program director for the Family, Children and Youth Program of the Hagedorn Foundation, in her testimony at the December 2 child-care hearing. “Crying, because I have a nine-year old son... Angry, because...we have known for years, decades...what is best for babies and children, and have not chosen to listen.” Long an advocate for the needs of preschool children, beginning at birth, Ms. Parmely observed:

“The old African proverb, that it takes a village to raise a child, tells us what is important, but we continue to ignore it. Though many [government officials] state the importance, declaring it the ‘decade of the children,’ ‘children are our future,’ etc., [these same officials] will tell you—‘children don’t vote; their parents are too busy...[to] come out to meetings, so we can’t prioritize...the issues...to ensure that children can grow up in healthy families and communities’.”¹⁵⁹

Ms. Parmely called upon the commission and Suffolk County government to look at Suffolk’s children “with a parent’s eye...to consider and change policies and practices that are not family supportive...to provide opportunities for all children in Suffolk County to grow up healthy and happy...and to raise a voice in Albany [for public policies that support children.]”¹⁶⁰

Ms. Parmely summarized the essence of this report to the legislature and its charge to Suffolk County government. Suffolk County alone cannot transform child care and early learning, but the commission believes that each Suffolk legislator, the county executive, each member of the executive departments, can filter every decision through this question: “What will it do to and for children?” In so doing, it is the commission’s hope that this report will have created a framework for realistic action now and for future actions that will meet the challenges and provide the opportunities for more quality child care and early learning for the preschool children of Suffolk County.

The commission believes that each of the recommendations above can be implemented before December 31, 2014. Each addresses incrementally a barrier to policies that see children “with a parent’s eye.” Each is affordable. Each is actionable now. Together, these recommendations provide a package that, despite uncertainties at the state and federal levels of government, can be implemented to enhance county policies toward achieving what we know works. As President Obama stated the challenge in his 2013 message to Congress, “So let’s do what works and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind.”

¹⁵⁹ Parmely, Lynda. Program director for the Family, Children and Youth Program at the Hagedorn Foundation, Testimony at the December 2 Welfare to Work Commission early learning and child care hearing.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

This report detailed a complex, vitally important and in some ways troubled network of policies, funding streams and programs that only partially and with great disparities based on class and circumstance, address the educational and child-care needs of Suffolk's children from birth to age five. The implications of this fragmented system are profound for the children and their families, as well as for the future health of Suffolk's broader educational, social and economic systems.

Jon Cooper, a former majority leader of the Suffolk County Legislature, summarized the challenge before Suffolk government leaders:

“Quality prekindergarten education is deeply important to me, as the president of two successful Long Island businesses, as a former elected official and especially as a parent of five children...The value of pre-K is not an airy abstraction. It's a reality...As for the costs: I'm a taxpayer. I've assembled government budgets. I've hired private-sector employees. Any employer understands the need for well-prepared workers. High-quality education is the long-term business and taxpayer benefit of [quality] pre-K.”

It is the hope of the commission that, by implementing the package of recommendations in this report, Suffolk County can strengthen what we know works for our preschool children so that, as former Legislator Cooper stated, they can be prepared “for the challenges they'll face later.”¹⁶¹



¹⁶¹ Cooper, Jon. “Can’t Debate Benefits of Quality Pre-K,” *Long Island Business Review*, April 4-10, 2014.

Respectfully submitted by the members of the Welfare to Work Commission of the Suffolk County Legislature,

Legislator Monica Martinez, Chair, Human Services Committee
Richard Koubek, Ph.D., Commission Chair, Gerald Ryan Outreach Center
Kathy Liguori, Commission Vice Chair, HabiTots Preschool and Child Care Centers

Marjorie Acevedo, for Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory
James Andrews, Suffolk County Department of Labor
Sr. Lisa Bergeron, Catholic Charities
Peggy Boyd, Family Service League
Barbara Egloff, Eastern Suffolk BOCES
Steven Chassman, Long Island Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence
Charles Fox, EOC of Suffolk County
Don Friedman, Empire Justice Center
Kimberly Gierasch, Suffolk County Department of Health
Robert Greenberger, FEGS Health & Human Services
Michael Haynes, Long Island Cares/The Harry Chapin Food Bank
Debbie R. Joseph, Wyandanch Homes and Property Development Corporation
Ellen Krakow, Nassau/Suffolk Law Services
Nina Leonhardt, Suffolk County Community College
John Nieves, Suffolk County Department of Social Services
Gwen O'Shea, Health and Welfare Council of Long Island
Ray O'Rourke, Suffolk County Workforce Investment Board
Michael Stoltz, Clubhouse of Suffolk
Joan Travan, Suffolk County Association of Municipal Employees
Luis Valenzuela, Long Island Council of Churches

Appendices

Appendix A: Participants Who Provided Testimony

Government Officials

1. Jennifer Casey, Suffolk County Planning Commission
2. George Heinz, Coordinator of Preschool Services, Suffolk County Department of Health Services
3. John O’Neill, Commissioner, Suffolk County Department of Social Services

Academic Experts

1. Dana Friedman, Executive Director, Early Years Institute
2. Elizabeth Palley, Professor of Social Work, Adelphi University
3. Janet Walerstein, Executive Director, Child Care Council of Suffolk

Agency Representatives

1. Denise Dowell, Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA)
2. Diane Eppolito, Quality Assurance and Planning Analyst, Long Island Head Start
3. Janice Friedman, Chief Executive Officer, Variety Child Learning Center
4. Carolyn Gammerman, Director, Early Childhood Direction Center
5. Elizabeth Geary, Director, Community Program Centers of Long Island
6. Richard Iannuzzi, President, New York State United Teachers (NYSUT)
7. Cheryl Keshner, Senior Paralegal/Community Advocate, Empire Justice Center
8. Kathy Liguori, HabiTots Preschool and Child Care Center
9. Shea Levin, Executive Director, Every Child Matters, LI
10. Dina Lieser, MD, Co-Director, Docs for Tots
11. Lynda Parmely, Program Director for Family, Children and Youth, Hagedorn Foundation
12. Kathleen Roche, Executive Director, Rainbow Chimes Early Education Center
13. Marielle Robinson, LI Progressive Coalition
14. Jennifer Marino Rojas , Vice President of Grants and Operations, Rauch Foundation
15. Sarah Walzer, Chief Executive Officer, Parent Child Home Program
16. Angela Zimmerman, Coordinator of Family Support Long Island, Molloy College

Members of the Public

1. Maria Almendares
2. Debra Alloncius
3. Alexander Alvarado
4. Keesha Bailey
5. Sophia Banegas
6. Tiffany Castro
7. Darcel Colon
8. Keishya Coltrain

9. Teresa Crawford
10. Delia Cruz
11. Mirna Cruz
12. Jennifer Dickinson
13. Monica Gamez
14. Jeff Goff
15. Elmar Guardo
16. Koelly Hocksmith
17. Jennifer Karagjozi
18. Beatrice Key
19. Darcel Leone
20. Reinade Leon
21. Kathleen Malloy
22. Eric Mayer
23. Delia McBride
24. Jose Melara
25. Earline Milligan
26. Wendy Nashid-Jackson
27. Deysi Portillo
28. Jenny Quezada
29. Christine Reilly
30. Roxanne Savage
31. Jessica Trujillo
32. Trudy Trujillo
33. Nolvía Velasquez
34. Michael Vitulli
35. David Welch
36. Sapita Zepada
37. An additional 25 East End parents participated anonymously in six focus groups conducted on November 13, at the Family Service League's North Fork Early Learning Center in Laurel.
38. 126 parents responded anonymously to the child-care survey online or on hard copy distributed at child-care centers. The survey questionnaire can be found below in Appendix E.

Appendix B:¹⁶²

Examples of New York State OCFS Categories of Child-Care Regulations

418-1.3 Building and Equipment

418-1.4 Fire Protection

418-1.5 Safety: Having emergency plans which include evacuation, sheltering in place, having enough supplies including first aid, water, food and other resources in the event parents cannot pick up their children due to a local disaster. Visitor identification and sign-in is addressed. Having carbon monoxide detectors, prohibition of firearms, matches and other poisonous or toxic substances and pocketbooks, backpacks or briefcases belonging to adults (including small objects that can be swallowed) are properly stored and kept out of reach of the children.

418-1.6 Transportation

418-1.7 Program Requirements:

- a) The child day-care center must establish a planned program of activities which are appropriate for the children in care.
- b) Children must be provided with a program of self-initiated, group-initiated and staff-initiated activities which are intellectually stimulating and foster self-reliance and social responsibility.
- c) A written daily schedule of program activities and routines.
- d) Children must receive instruction, consistent with their age, needs and circumstances.
- e) The child day-care center must make a sufficient quantity and variety of materials and play equipment available to the children.
- f) Climbing and large motor apparatus should be available either inside the child day-care center or in the outdoor play space.
- g) Daily, supervised outdoor play is required for all children in care, except during inclement or extreme weather.
- h) Except while sleeping, awaking or going to sleep, an infant must not be left in a crib, playpen or other confined space for more than 30 minutes at any one time.
- i) Appropriate sleep, rest and quiet periods which are responsive to individual and group needs must be provided.

418-1.9 Discipline/Behavior Management: The program must establish and follow a written plan for behavior management that is acceptable to the OCFS

418-1.10 Child Abuse and Maltreatment

418-1.11 Health and Infection Control: All children attending the day-care centers must be immunized in accordance with New York State Public Health law unless written waivers are approved for religious beliefs.

418-1.12 Nutrition: This encompasses proper sanitation to proper refrigeration of perishable foods

418-1.14 Training: Each person responsible for developing, directing and supervising the daily activity programs for children (director) and each employee must complete a minimum of thirty (30) hours of training every two years.

¹⁶² http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/childcare/daycare_regs.asp

Appendix C:
NYS Child Care Market Rates, Suffolk County
 Effective April 1, 2014¹⁶³

DAY CARE CENTER				
Age of Child:	Under 1 ½	1 ½ - 2	3 - 5	6 – 12
Hourly	\$9.50	\$9.25	\$10.00	\$10.00
Part-Day	\$45	\$41	\$38	\$38
Daily	\$68	\$62	\$57	\$57
Weekly	\$340	\$311	\$285	\$283
REGISTERED FAMILY DAY CARE				
Age of Child:	Under 1 ½	1 ½ - 2	3 - 5	6 – 12
Hourly	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$10.00
Part-Day	\$37	\$37	\$33*	\$33*
Daily	\$56	\$55	\$50*	\$50*
Weekly	\$275	\$250*	\$250	\$250
GROUP FAMILY DAY CARE				
Age of Child:	Under 1 ½	1 ½ - 2	3 - 5	6 – 12
Hourly	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$10.00
Part-Time	\$40	\$40	\$39	\$37
Daily	\$60	\$60	\$59	\$55
Weekly	\$285	\$275	\$275	\$275
SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE				
Age of Child:	Under 1 ½	1 ½ - 2	3 - 5	6 – 12
Hourly	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$10.00
Part-Time	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$38
Daily	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$57
Weekly	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$283
INFORMAL PROVIDERS				
Age of Child:	Under 1 ½	1 ½ - 2	3 - 5	6 – 12
Hourly	\$6.50	\$6.50	\$6.50	\$6.50
Part-Time	\$24	\$24	\$21*	\$21*
Daily	\$36	\$36	\$33*	\$33*
Weekly	\$179	\$163*	\$163	\$163
INFORMAL ENHANCED RATE (The “informal enhanced rate” is the rate that informal providers are entitled to once they complete training provided by the Child Care Council of Suffolk)				
Age of Child:	Under 1 ½	1 ½ - 2	3 - 5	6 – 12
Hourly	\$7.00	\$7.00	\$7.00	\$7.00
Part-Time	\$26	\$26	\$23*	\$23*
Daily	\$39	\$39	\$35*	\$35*
Weekly	\$193	\$175*	\$175	\$175

* Rates shown with an asterisk are lower than the 2011 Market Rates. If your current DSS rate is higher, your rate will be reduced to the new Market Rate for services provided on or after April 1, 2014.

¹⁶³ Barnett, Robin, Assistant Division Administrator, Family and Children’s Services, Suffolk County Department of Social Services. Email to Welfare to Work Commission chair Richard Koubek, May 19, 2014.

Appendix D:¹⁶⁴
CCBG State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2013-14 to SFY 2014-15 Comparison

District	SFY 2013-14	SFY 2014-15	\$ Difference	% Difference
New York City	\$468,354,409	\$501,503,642	\$33,149,233	7.1%
Nassau	\$35,078,346	\$44,065,330	\$8,986,984	25.6%
Westchester	\$25,631,044	\$27,775,594	\$2,144,550	8.4%
Onondaga	\$14,283,861	\$16,336,953	\$2,053,092	14.4%
Monroe	\$34,523,538	\$36,259,399	\$1,735,861	5.0%
Albany	\$11,303,239	\$12,665,097	\$1,361,858	12.0%
Erie	\$23,070,592	\$24,336,843	\$1,266,251	5.5%
Orange	\$6,330,743	\$6,948,345	\$617,602	9.8%
Rockland	\$7,861,603	\$8,465,441	\$603,838	7.7%
Dutchess	\$6,390,393	\$6,993,359	\$602,966	9.4%
Rensselaer	\$3,549,018	\$4,146,750	\$597,732	16.8%
Suffolk	\$30,783,444	\$31,364,169	\$580,725	1.9%
Schenectady	\$5,467,331	\$5,985,825	\$518,494	9.5%
Oswego	\$1,958,615	\$2,387,615	\$429,000	21.9%
Oneida	\$6,303,987	\$6,646,229	\$342,242	5.4%
Ulster	\$3,467,984	\$3,753,499	\$285,515	8.2%
Tompkins	\$1,992,675	\$2,263,595	\$270,920	13.6%
Cayuga	\$1,547,380	\$1,731,746	\$184,366	11.9%
Columbia	\$1,121,660	\$1,294,424	\$172,764	15.4%
Cattaraugus	\$1,742,163	\$1,910,789	\$168,626	9.7%
Chenango	\$451,898	\$606,343	\$154,445	34.2%
Madison	\$701,591	\$841,557	\$139,966	19.9%
Tioga	\$1,337,481	\$1,468,569	\$131,088	9.8%
Wayne	\$1,032,914	\$1,163,145	\$130,231	12.6%
Clinton	\$830,533	\$960,070	\$129,537	15.6%
Livingston	\$1,068,602	\$1,192,450	\$123,848	11.6%
Sullivan	\$1,721,844	\$1,840,133	\$118,289	6.9%
Otsego	\$840,235	\$951,105	\$110,870	13.2%
Genesee	\$944,133	\$1,051,650	\$107,517	11.4%

¹⁶⁴ Suffolk County Department of Social Services. Email from DSS Commissioner John O'Neill to Welfare to Work Commission vice chair Kathy Liguori, May 19, 2014.

District	SFY 2013-14	SFY 2014-15	\$ Difference	% Difference
Herkimer	\$846,672	\$941,984	\$95,312	11.3%
Putnam	\$813,523	\$900,437	\$86,914	10.7%
St Lawrence	\$1,793,260	\$1,871,243	\$77,983	4.3%
Delaware	\$1,207,931	\$1,279,709	\$71,778	5.9%
Cortland	\$1,010,363	\$1,062,880	\$52,517	5.2%
Wyoming	\$424,813	\$472,604	\$47,791	11.2%
Greene	\$467,365	\$513,475	\$46,110	9.9%
Essex	\$366,067	\$392,616	\$26,549	7.3%
Orleans	\$899,226	\$924,577	\$25,351	2.8%
Montgomery	\$681,507	\$703,648	\$22,141	3.2%
Schoharie	\$585,758	\$599,716	\$13,958	2.4%
Washington	\$872,133	\$874,567	\$2,434	0.3%
Hamilton	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
Schuyler	\$446,926	\$443,186	-\$3,740	-0.8%
Fulton	\$554,724	\$545,317	-\$9,407	-1.7%
Seneca	\$356,275	\$326,528	-\$29,747	-8.3%
Lewis	\$340,589	\$309,023	-\$31,566	-9.3%
Franklin	\$1,039,648	\$938,975	-\$100,673	-9.7%
Warren	\$1,427,402	\$1,317,215	-\$110,187	-7.7%

5. How easy or difficult was it to find child care that met the following criteria:

	Very Easy	Somewhat Easy	Neither Easy Nor Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult
Affordable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hours offered when needed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transportation provided	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spoke my family's language	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encouraged my involvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Convenient location	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Philosophy/curriculum I wanted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
High quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Do you/have you received government financial support to help you pay for child care?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

6a. If yes, how easy or difficult was it for you to receive the financial support you were eligible for?

1 2 3 4 5

Very Easy Very Difficult

6b. If you had a co-pay, how easy or difficult was it for you to afford the co-pay?

1 2 3 4 5

Very Easy Very Difficult

7. What is your gender?

- Female
 Male

8. What is your home zip code?

9. How old are you?

- under 20
- 20 - 30
- 31 - 40
- 41 - 50
- over 50

10. Are you:

- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Black/African American (non-Hispanic)
- Latino/Hispanic
- White (non-Hispanic)
- Other:

11. Is this an English Second Language home?

- Yes
- No

12a. What is the highest level of education for Mother?

- GED
- High School Diploma
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Trade Certificate
- Some College

12b. What is the highest level of education for Father?

- GED
- High School Diploma
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Trade Certificate
- Some College

13. What was your total HOUSEHOLD income in 2012 (before taxes for all family members living in the household)?

- Less than \$18,000
- \$18,000 - \$24,000
- \$24,001 - \$35,000
- \$35,001 - \$47,000
- \$47,001 - \$70,000
- \$70,001 - \$94,000
- More than \$94,000

14a. How many family members in your household are over 18 years of age?

14b. How many family members in your household are under 17 years of age?

15. Are you currently employed?

- Yes
- No

16. What is your typical start time for work?

___:___ ___

End time?

___:___ ___

17. Please describe how child care helps your family.

18. Please describe what more could be done to help you find the CHILD CARE you want for your children.