



New York Child Advocacy and Health Organizations Celebrate the Passage of the New York Child Poverty Reduction Act

Contact: Kate Breslin, (518) 364-3355 kbreslin@scaany.org
Larry Marx, (414) 507-9581 larry@thechildrensagenda.org
Ben Anderson, (212) 697-0942 banderson@childrensdefense.org

June 11, 2021. New York's Legislature has voted overwhelmingly for the Child Poverty Reduction Act, a bill committing New York leaders to publicly set a goal of cutting child poverty in half in the next ten years and take immediate steps toward that goal. With the Governor's signature, New York law will clearly signal that our state will no longer tolerate having two in five children living just above or in poverty.

The Child Poverty Reduction Act S.2755-C (Ramos)/ A.1160-C (Bronson) carves the beginning of a path to sharply reduce child poverty in New York State. This legislation declares policymakers' intent to cut child poverty in half in ten years and establishes the Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council tasked with developing a plan to do it. The Council will evaluate specific policies and their impacts on child poverty, including racial disparities, make concrete budget and policy recommendations with benchmarks and timelines, and publicly share data to make sure that New York meets its goal.

"New York State has taken a crucial step toward reducing poverty among its youngest residents by passing the Child Poverty Reduction Act," said Dia Bryant, Interim Executive Director of **The Education Trust-New York**. "As the ongoing pandemic continues to take a disproportionate toll on communities of color, who have far greater rates of children experiencing poverty, it is critical that state leaders take on this issue with the greatest of urgency. We owe it to our children, our families, and our communities."

Before the pandemic, New York's child poverty rate was higher than 32 other states. Before the pandemic, a Black child was two times more likely to live in poverty than a white child. Before the pandemic, poverty affected the lives of one in five New York children and, in some communities – including Rochester, Buffalo, and the Bronx – one in every two children. 2020 was already well-past time to address child poverty.

Since the pandemic, hundreds of thousands more children and families have plunged into poverty. Racial inequities have widened and been laid bare. Of the 4,200 children that lost a parent or caregiver to COVID-19, Black and Hispanic children experienced that tragedy at twice the rate of Asian and white children. By March 2021, 31% of New York adults reported it had been somewhat or very difficult to pay for usual household expenses and 24% reported not being current on rent or mortgage, with eviction or foreclosure in the next two months likely.

"Child homelessness, hunger and suffering has been normalized in New York for far too long. This bill will redefine how we measure success and ensure New York prioritizes poor children in the budget process," said Ben Anderson, Director of Poverty and Health Policy at the **Children's Defense Fund-New York**. "We thank Senator Ramos and Assemblymember Bronson for their leadership on this landmark bill."

The Child Poverty Reduction Act went before the legislature with 41 co-sponsors in the Assembly and 24 co-sponsors in the Senate. New York legislators – Democrats and Republicans from rural, urban, and suburban communities that span the entirety of New York State – sent a clear message, with all but three voting in favor.

Outside of the legislature, nearly 60 partners, coming from all corners of the state and all walks of life, have joined in advancing the Child Poverty Reduction Act. Enthusiasm for this bold and urgently-needed initiative comes from nurses, pediatricians, parents, educators, child care providers, colleges and universities, hospital leaders, community health centers, child welfare agencies, libraries, youth bureaus, and community-based organizations. These are the people who, every day, see and try to cure child poverty's ills. These are the people who know it would be better for our children, our families, our communities, and our state, if we prevented poverty before it seeded poor health, problems in school, and reduced opportunity.

"If signed by the Governor, this law will be a bridge from today, when we make policy and budget decisions and hope they don't plunge more children into poverty, to a new day when New York is intentional about reducing child poverty and improving equity," said Kate Breslin, President and CEO of the **Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy**. "This bill creates a new expectation that New York will significantly and consistently year over year cut child poverty by employing analysis, measurement over time, and public accountability about whether and how a wide variety of policy and budget decisions affect opportunity and economic security for our most vulnerable children."

Following the Great Recession in 2008, when poverty rates rose, they continued to climb for six years, until 2015, when they finally dipped slightly. This time needs to be – and will be – different, for the sake of every single child and family whether they live in Buffalo, Batavia, or Brooklyn.

There is no time to waste. Right now, there are federal funds available to jump start this effort.

New York certainly has the means to tackle child poverty and legislative leaders just demonstrated they have the will. When the Governor signs the Child Poverty Reduction Act, New York will signal our shared intention to make budget and policy choices that leave no

child behind. “In New York State, there are over 700,000 children living in poverty. That’s approximately 1 out every 5 children in the New York State. In numerous communities in New York City, the number of children in poverty is as high as 1 in 2 children. The science is clear, poverty detrimentally impacts child development and their immediate and long term well-being. Too many children, disproportionately Black and brown, are facing poverty every day despite the tireless efforts of their working parents and caregivers. **Citizens’ Committee for Children** applauds the Senate and Assembly for taking this critical step forward and looks forward to working with them and our child advocacy colleagues to advance budget, legislative and program priorities that confront and tackle child poverty,” stated Jennifer March, Executive Director.

“We congratulate the legislature for recognizing the vital importance of addressing child poverty now,” said Elie Ward, Director of Policy, **NYS American Academy of Pediatrics**. “Hundreds of thousands of children in New York suffered the effects of poverty before the COVID pandemic, but the number of additional children who fell into poverty in the last year has created a child poverty crisis of unimaginable proportions. We must address this crisis now. The children cannot wait any longer.”

“Over 300,000 New York children have been newly pushed into or close to poverty due to the pandemic – that’s more children than live in Westchester County – we can and must do better by our children. Westchester Children’s Association applauds Senate and Assembly leadership for this important first step in reducing child poverty; now we must commit to the resources, data transparency, budget decisions and policies that will make it happen,” stated Allison Lake, Executive Director, **Westchester Children’s Association**.

"I am thrilled to see the Child Poverty Reduction Act pass the Legislature. Poverty has negative effects on children that last a lifetime, and can add stress to parents that unfortunately may result in abuse. Poverty is also often misidentified as neglect. PCANY's mission is to strengthen families, and this Act will help do just that. I look forward to working with partners to cut child poverty in half in ten years!" exclaimed Tim Hathaway, Executive Director, **Prevent Child Abuse NY**.

"Immigrant children make up 41% of all children in New York State living in low-income families," said Liza Schwartzwald, Senior Manager of Education Policy at the **New York Immigration Coalition**. "The Child Poverty Reduction Act is a critical step in New York State's commitment to reducing inequity for these and all families. The New York Immigration Coalition thanks Senator Ramos and Assemblymember Bronson for putting forward this legislation and addressing the disparities our families have faced even before the COVID-19 crisis. We look forward to continuing the work to ensure that all children in New York State can thrive."

“Beyond the incalculable moral toll, child poverty costs the state billions of dollars every year in lost opportunity. But it is a choice. We know how to end it and the Child Poverty Reduction Act commits New York State to cutting it in half. Robin Hood is grateful for the leadership of Senator Ramos and Assemblymember Bronson to advance this landmark legislation,” said Jason Cone, Chief Public Policy Officer of **Robin Hood**.

“As the Physician-in-Chief of Golisano Children’s Hospital at the University of Rochester, I see first-hand the pervasive effects of poverty on our children’s health every day – the harm to our kids is real and alarming, and it can last a lifetime,” said Patrick Brophy, M.D., William H. Eilinger Chair of Pediatrics, **University of Rochester Medical Center, Golisano Children’s Hospital**. “So the onus is on our community to do everything we can to eradicate poverty.”

“We are grateful that the New York legislature voted to take this historic first step, thanks to the leadership of Assemblymember Bronson and Senator Ramos,” said Larry Marx, CEO of **The Children’s Agenda**. “Half of our community’s children lived in poverty in Rochester every year of the last decade – enduring hardships that act like a life sentence. But cutting child poverty in half in 10 years is entirely realistic; it’s been done before with tax credits, expanded childcare, Pre-K, and home visiting programs for low-income and working families. The public policy decisions New York State makes or fails to make in these same areas from now until 2030 will determine the trajectory of the health, education and success for hundreds of thousands of this generation’s children.”