INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE: ADDRESSING NEW YORK CITY’S CHILD CARE CRISIS

As New York City continues to struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic, New Yorkers call on our next mayor to address child care needs that would provide economic relief to working parents and help support our youngest New Yorkers stay developmentally on track.

More than three in four parents from low-income households indicated in a recent poll that they have struggled to pay for basic necessities such as food, housing, and health care over the course of the pandemic.

More than half of those who struggled ultimately lost their housing or were evicted.

Of those, one in three parents who lost housing indicated they are currently homeless or living in a shelter.

Parents also indicated that they do not always have access to information about financial resources, supports, or programs available to help cover the high costs of child care. Parents who are not able to access child care said that it can carry negative consequences at work — including losing or having to quit a job — perpetuating a cycle of financial vulnerability that hurts families, children, and our communities.

In addition, these work disruptions have impacted parents unevenly. In fact, Black and Latinx parents were three times more likely to report a job loss due to child care needs than White parents.

Parents have also experienced work consequences related to lack of child care over the past year, which have disproportionately impacted Black and Latinx parents, who were nearly three times more likely to lose their job than White parents.

Our Summer 2021 poll makes clear that the pandemic-related challenges parents, families, and children face continue to mount as the crisis continues, heightening the level of economic instability families are experiencing. The poll also found that New York City residents resoundingly support an increased investment in early childhood programs at the city, state, and federal levels.

**FOLLOWING ARE FOUR KEY FINDINGS** that highlight the critical need for New York City’s next mayor to act quickly to support families of infants and toddlers, putting families on the path to economic stability and our youngest residents on the path to a bright future.
Many parents, especially Black and Latinx parents and those from low-income households, report child care is often a burden and that finding affordable, high-quality child care is difficult in New York City. An overwhelming majority of residents indicated that the next mayor — and other elected local and state officials — should make child care a priority.

Lack of access to child care has created a number of financial difficulties for parents, including job loss and difficulty paying for basic expenses.

Residents support a number of critical solutions to keep infants and toddlers healthy and developmentally on-track including access to high-quality child care, investing in early childhood programs, and improving resources that would be helpful to parents.

Parents are largely satisfied with their family-based or center-based child care centers, although Black and Latinx parents and parents from low-income households are much less likely to rank their experience as positive. Residents broadly support further investments in these programs.

**FINDING 1:**

Many parents, especially Black and Latinx parents and those from low-income households, report child care is often a burden and that finding affordable, high-quality child care is difficult in New York City. An overwhelming majority of residents indicated that the next mayor — and other elected local and state officials — should make child care a priority.

9 out of 10 residents said that child care is a burden for families in New York City. Residents also indicated that they believe that part of the challenge is a lack of clear and reliable information on programs and financial assistance.

Of those who indicated child care is a burden, 9 out of 10 said it is hard to find affordable, high-quality child care that families are completely satisfied with.
Nearly 9 in 10 residents ranked free or low-cost child care as a priority for the next mayor of New York City to focus on. Residents of color and residents from low-income households were more likely to rank free or low-cost child care as very important.

Residents expressed strong support for investing additional resources into early childhood programs for infants and toddlers.

86% RANKED AS VERY IMPORTANT

- 59% Black residents
- 60% Latinx residents
- 38% White residents
- 57% Residents from low-income households
- 46% Residents from not low-income households

89% Approve of local and state government officials doing more to make sure that infants and toddlers in New York City are healthy and developmentally on track at birth and throughout early childhood.

84% Support New York City investing more public funds in expanding access to affordable, high-quality child care for families with infants and toddlers.

85% Support New York City using federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act to support child care programming, including providing child care subsidies to families and grants to child care providers that currently have low numbers of children due to the pandemic and may be forced to permanently close.
Nearly 9 in 10 parents ranked free or low-cost early education such as preschool and pre-kindergarten as a priority for the next mayor of New York City. Residents of color and residents from low-income households were more likely to rank early education as very important.

About 3 in 4 residents feel that New York City should be doing more to ensure infants and toddlers are healthy and developmentally on track. Black and Latinx and residents from low-income households were more likely to feel strongly about this issue.
Parents reported that child care issues had work-related consequences.

45% of parents had to leave work early.
41% of parents arrived to work late.
37% missed work.
20% of parents were unproductive or distracted at work.
12% quit their job.
10% lost their job.

Black and Latinx parents were nearly three times more likely to lose their job than White parents, while parents from low-income households were nearly twice as likely to quit their job as parents from not low-income households.

Findings:
Child care has also created a number of economic difficulties for parents, including work-related consequences and difficulty paying for basic expenses.
Parents indicated they have had to rely on outside support or make financial sacrifices to afford child care.

- **31%** Have a friend or family member watch their child some of the time
- **21%** Use credit cards to pay for child care or other essential needs
- **21%** Cut back on basic expenses like food or transportation
- **21%** Cut back on their work hours to care for their child themselves
- **19%** Borrow money from friends of family
- **19%** Have taken on another job
- **18%** Cut back on the number of hours their child is in child care
- **18%** Switch to less expensive child care

Parents of color and those from low-income households have weathered a disproportionate economic impact throughout the pandemic, with a greater proportion reporting having had trouble paying for basic expenses such as food, housing, and/or health care in the last year.

**HAD TROUBLE PAYING FOR BASIC EXPENSES**

- Black parents | 61%
- Latinx parents | 63%
- White parents | 48%
- Parents from low-income households | 76%
- Parents from not low-income households | 49%
Of parents who indicated they had trouble paying for expenses, an astounding 1 in 2 lost housing or were evicted.

Of those who lost housing or were evicted, nearly 1 in 3 is either currently homeless or living in a shelter.

- 37% Found another apartment or housing
- 24% Staying with friends or family
- 17% Currently homeless or without shelter
- 13% In a shelter

No parent should be forced to make the difficult choices that New York City families are faced with every day in order to provide child care for their children.
Residents support a number of critical solutions to keep infants and toddlers healthy and developmentally on-track including access to high-quality child care, investing in early childhood programs, and improving resources that would be helpful to parents.

While residents see access to high-quality child care as critical to ensuring children are prepared for school, they identified many obstacles to obtaining access.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Obstacle</th>
<th>All Residents</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Latinx</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Low-income</th>
<th>Not Low-Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents are unable to afford high-quality child care</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents of color and those from low-income households don’t have access to high-quality programs</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents often do not have access to child care outside typical working hours</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New parents don’t have access to mental health support</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents often do not have access to child care during the summer months</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents don’t have access to adequate counseling, crisis management, and health services for them and their families</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents cannot access linguistically responsive early childhood programs</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents are unable to find child care providers who share their language and culture</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New parents don’t have access to home visits from community-based programs or other providers to help them navigate new parenthood</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Residents overwhelmingly indicated that they do not believe new parents have access to mental health support.

81% of parents indicated this is an obstacle.

1 in 3 parents indicated their child had been turned away from a center- or home-based program because the provider could not offer enough support for a child with a learning or physical disability.

Parents indicated that New York City should be investing more in the following services that would be helpful to them:

- Programs and services for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities 81%
- Affordable, high-quality child care for toddlers 81%
- Affordable, high-quality infant care for newborns 79%
- Free preschool programs for 3-year-olds 79%
- Free pre-kindergarten for 4-year-olds 79%
- Affordable prenatal and neonatal care 76%
- Early childhood programs that are culturally responsive to the communities they serve 75%
- Child care and early learning programs for children 0-3 75%
- Home visits for families with newborns from specialists trained in early childhood development 72%
FINDING 4:

Parents are largely satisfied with their family-based or center-based child care centers, although Black and Latinx parents and parents from low-income households are much less likely to rank their experience as positive. Residents broadly support further investments in these programs.

72% of parents described their center-based child care program quality as positive.

- Black parents: 60%
- Latinx parents: 67%
- White parents: 86%
- Parents from low-income households: 63%
- Parents from not-low-income households: 78%

But parents of color and parents from low-income households were less likely to have a positive experience.

73% of parents described their family-based child care program quality as positive.

- Black parents: 58%
- Latinx parents: 69%
- White parents: 86%
- Parents from low-income households: 66%
- Parents from not-low-income households: 78%

But parents of color and parents from low-income households were less likely to have a positive experience.
Residents overwhelmingly support local officials taking steps to help ease the financial burdens that child care providers at center- or home-based care programs face.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly supports</th>
<th>Supports</th>
<th>All Residents</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Latinx</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Low-income</th>
<th>Not Low-income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial assistance for pandemic-related protective gear and cleaning supplies</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased financial assistance to low-income parents to cover tuition and other fees paid for by the child’s parents</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial assistance for providers to cover wages and employee benefits</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial assistance for providers to cover the costs of repairs and additions like creating a fenced-in yard, adding a sink or bathroom, or building updates due to fire or building codes</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidies or other financial help from government agencies to providers</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is critical that the next mayor act with the greatest urgency to create an early childhood system that works for all families. Our city’s future depends on it.