

A CRITICAL MOMENT:

Governor Hochul's State of the State presents ideas and opportunities to advance educational equity

Governor Hochul's 2023 State of the State includes several critical investments that will help to support New York's children and families beginning at birth through college and into the workforce.

But there is still more work to be done to ensure all New Yorkers have access to the educational experiences that will allow them to ultimately earn a family-sustaining wage and engage in their communities.

This is a critical time for New York, as the state continues to rebuild its economy amid an ongoing and persistent pandemic while also bracing for a looming recession.

Now more than ever, it is imperative that state leaders prioritize equity and support families and communities who have historically been underserved by our education systems.

Many of the proposals in Hochul's State of the State aim to do just that.

As this budget season and legislative session progresses, we urge lawmakers to make a commitment to New York families by protecting the provisions that aim to interrupt cycles of poverty and supporting additional legislation that fosters more equity for all of our residents.

▶ KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE STATE OF THE STATE

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Increase Eligibility for Child Care Assistance



Governor Hochul's proposal will increase eligibility for child care assistance to the maximum allowed by federal law — ensuring families earning up to 85 percent of New York's median income receive assistance.



The proposal will also cap family copays for child care at one percent above the federal poverty level.

The state should also take steps to ensure that all families, especially families eligible for child care assistance, have access to high-quality care. This should include expanding QUALITYstarsNY and creating financial incentives to support providers' capacity to participate in the program. The state should also take concrete steps to ensure that we consider the true cost of high-quality child care in determining child care assistance subsidies — and move permanently away from using market rates.

Simplify Families' Access to Child Care Assistance



While expanding eligibility is vital, the Governor's proposal also includes important steps to increase access. Despite eligibility expansions passed last year, only 10 percent of families who are eligible are receiving child care assistance. Governor Hochul's State of the State proposal will deploy a statewide e-application to eliminate differences in the way counties administer the subsidy program and allow families to pre-screen for eligibility and apply for child care assistance. The Governor will also allow families that receive other forms of public assistance — such as WIC, HEAP, Medicaid, and SNAP — to automatically qualify for child care assistance without having to re-demonstrate eligibility.

These are critical steps to make it easier and less stigmatizing for families to locate child care and apply for subsidies, which should dramatically increase the number of applications completed successfully. The state should also ensure that resources related to the statewide application are available in multiple languages and that families who are undocumented have equitable access to child care assistance programs.

Support the Child Care Workforce



Governor Hochul's proposal will use unspent federal funds to establish a new Workforce Retention Grant Program to provide payments to existing staff in 17,000 programs statewide, tackling the exodus from the sector head-on. Grants will also be used to cover payroll tax assistance and support staff recruitment strategies, including sign on bonuses for new employees and other expenses related to hiring new staff, making it more financially reasonable to pursue this career option.

To build on this important progress, the state should also invest in professional development for child care professionals, and a related pay-scale to help ensure child care workers are paid family-sustaining wages.

Partner with Businesses to Expand Access to High-Quality, Affordable Child Care



Governor Hochul will establish the New York State Employer-Supported Child Care (ESC) pilot program to facilitate splitting the costs of care for eligible employees between the state, employers, and employees. In the ESC pilot, employers will contribute a third of the cost of care for families between 85 percent and 100 percent of median income, and the state will match it, reducing out-of-pocket costs for these families and generating additional financial support for child care.

Governor Hochul's proposal will establish a Business Navigator program in each of the 10 Regional Economic Development Councils (REDC) regions to help interested businesses identify options to support employees' child care needs, as well as develop a statewide employer child care guidebook.

The state should also ensure that Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs) are integral to the Business Navigator Pilot program and are fully equipped to support providers and other businesses throughout the process.

Make Historic New Investments in Public Education



For the second year in a row, Governor Hochul is committing to fully fund the state’s Foundation Aid to local education agencies, driving an additional \$2.7 billion into school districts across the state.

While these are crucial resources for school districts to support students in recovering from the impact of the pandemic on learning, they come as school districts across New York State have significant portions of their federal American Rescue Plan Act funds remaining.

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) should consider providing guidance and support to districts on how to effectively and expeditiously utilize their additional Foundation Aid and federal ARPA dollars, with a focus on accelerating spending on early literacy, high-quality instructional materials, parent engagement and other areas that have been identified as state and district priorities.

Establish High-Impact Tutoring Programs Across the State to Address Learning Loss



High-impact tutoring can be a critical intervention to support academic acceleration. Governor Hochul’s proposal to invest \$250 million of

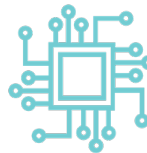
the increase in Foundation Aid to create high-impact tutoring programs across the state has the potential to help thousands of students recover from the impact of interrupted instruction on their learning.

To be successful, tutoring programs should be evidence-based, use high-quality instructional materials, and target student needs in reading and math. Schools should also partner with community organizations to increase capacity, strengthen community connections, and reduce the workload of teachers. At the same time, schools should be incentivized to use high-impact tutoring programs as

a pipeline for educators and others looking to become certified teachers, with an eye for cultivating a more diverse teacher workforce. [Our recent analysis](#) found that the makeup of the state’s teacher workforce falls far short in representing the rich diversity of its students, leaving many students of color without access to teachers of the same race.

Finally, the state should also develop a metric to measure whether the programs are having a positive impact on student learning and a strategy for scaling the most effective programs to reach more students.

Create New Early College High School and P-TECH Programs



Access to college level coursework not only prepares students for the rigors of higher education, but it also allows students to earn college credits that will ultimately save them

time and money. Governor Hochul’s proposal to invest \$20 million into the establishment of new early college high school and P-TECH programs is a significant step toward ensuring that more students have an opportunity to enroll in courses that lead to competitive credentials.

Early college and P-TECH are proven national models that remove barriers to postsecondary opportunity by shortening undergraduate completion time and expenses. Students who participate in these programs attain associate degrees at a faster pace, allowing them to move toward even higher attainment should they wish.

It is imperative, however, that the state prioritizes directing these programs to students who have been historically excluded. Our analyses over the years consistently find that students of color and students from low-income background lack access to the

rigorous coursework — including college credit bearing classes — that prepare them for college and the workforce.

It is also crucial that the state aligns the content and saturation of these programs to the workforce needs of the state. State leadership should also establish metrics for assessing whether these new programs are successfully preparing students to not only enroll in college, but ultimately persist in earning a postsecondary degree or credential.

Create a Robust High School-College-Workforce Pipeline



Careers that provide family-sustaining wages are a critical component to helping lift families out of generational poverty. Governor Hochul’s proposal to invest \$10 million into funding

for school systems and community colleges to collaborate with local industries to develop plans to align high school and college coursework to industry needs is an essential first step toward ensuring more high school graduates are workforce ready.

This investment should be accompanied with a plan to ensure that all students have equitable access to the many pathways that lead to high-paying jobs. Our analyses over the years have consistently found that students of color and students from low-income background are often tracked into less rigorous diploma pathways — excluding critical math and science coursework — that do not put them on the path to earning a family-sustaining wage.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Directly Admit All New York Students to Their Local Community Colleges

Access to a college education can be a key factor in putting New Yorkers on the path to earning a family-sustaining wage and full civic participation. Last

year, Governor Hochul included a commitment to supporting two thirds of all New Yorkers in earning a postsecondary degree or credential by 2030.

This year’s proposal to partner with school districts to ensure that all graduating high school seniors are accepted into their local community college will enable more New Yorkers to realize the dream of a higher education.

It will be crucial that this investment is accompanied with resources to ensure students have access to the supports they need to succeed in a higher education setting, particularly those who have been most impacted by interrupted instruction during the pandemic. This is especially important as the New York State Education Department continues to grant flexibility to students in earning a high school diploma. [Our analysis](#) found that of 2014 high school graduates who qualified for New York’s Tuition Assistance Program and immediately enrolled in a 2-year public institution, just 12 percent graduated on time and just 44% graduated within six years of enrollment.

This proposal should also be accompanied by a mechanism to ensure that students who might desire to attend a SUNY school that offers a higher level of degree attainment are not tracked into their local community college, as well as plans to support students who desire to transition to a four-year SUNY campus. Finally, New York should follow the lead of CUNY and California and eliminate non-credit bearing remedial coursework for community college students. Remedial courses lead to increased debt, lower persistence and completion for students and should be replaced with a co-requisite model that provides both credit and extra support to students concurrently.

The proposal to initiate a cascading admissions pilot, also included in the State of the State, could offer an opportunity to ensure that all students have access to any SUNY program of their choice and ability, not just community colleges.

Equity Issues We Want to See More Focus On



Early Literacy: Thirty states have passed legislation aligned to the science of reading, a vast, interdisciplinary body of research about how children learn to read. New York does not have any state policies aligned with the science of reading and many schools are using non-evidence based instructional resources, which plays a part in the poor literacy outcomes we see across the state. State leaders must pass legislation that supports and incentivizes the use of evidence-based literacy instruction across the state to ensure more students are reading proficiently by 3rd grade.



Teacher Diversity: New York State is home to one of the most diverse student populations in the country. Yet the makeup of the state's teacher workforce falls far short in representing the rich racial/ethnic diversity of its students, leaving many students of color without access to teachers of the same race as them, despite research showing the positive impact of diverse teachers on all students. State leaders must provide additional support to schools to develop a diverse teacher pipeline and implement strategies that recruit, retain, and support diverse teachers across the state.



Cradle to Career Data System: New York is in desperate need of a comprehensive system that connects statewide data from early childhood through K-12, postsecondary education, and the workforce. We support adoption of a P-20 data system that would help leaders answer

policy challenges, target resources, and better support students on their educational journey. NYSED has also prioritized this in its upcoming information upgrades.



Stronger Graduation Requirements: Ed Trust–NY supports policies that strengthen graduation requirements, including administration of all Regents exams, an end to state policy changes that make it easier for students to graduate, and increased data collection and transparency around Regents exam performance and postsecondary student success to determine how well graduates are faring in college and career.



Expansion of the Empire State Tax Credit: New York is home to several communities with the highest rates of child poverty in the country. Nearly one in five children in New York live in poverty, and for children of color and those living in under-resourced communities, that rate shoots up to almost one in three children living in poverty. As the only state with a child tax credit to exclude children under age 4, this is the time to expand the Empire State Tax Credit to include children during the first three years of life, a time of critical brain growth and development when children are particularly vulnerable to the long-term impacts of poverty. With Black and Latinx New York children experiencing poverty at dramatically higher rates than white children, strengthening the child tax credit is both a racial equity and economic justice issue.

