



# Our New York Children's Budget: A Community Vision for Prioritizing Our Children



March 2022

# CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND-NEW YORK

The Children's Defense Fund-New York envisions a nation where marginalized children flourish, leaders prioritize their well-being and communities wield the power to assure they thrive. To realize this vision, we pursue a movement-building and institutional growth strategy to build power for child-centered public policy, informed by racial equity and the lived experience of children and youth.

Our Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

We serve and advocate for the largest, most diverse generation in America: the 73 million children and youth under the age of 18 and 30 million young adults under the age of 25 nationwide, with particular attention to those living in poverty and communities of color.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>FOREWARD</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CHILDREN'S BUDGET</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>RACIAL JUSTICE</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CHILD WELFARE</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>ECONOMIC MOBILITY</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>EDUCATION JUSTICE</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>HEALTH JUSTICE</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>YOUTH JUSTICE</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>15</b>

# FOREWARD

Civil rights activist and Children’s Defense Fund founder Marian Wright Edelman once said, “We don’t have a money problem. We have a profound values and priorities problem, and we need to change it in the budgets.” Ms. Edelman made this statement in reference to the federal budget in 2014 and had delivered similar remarks related to prior federal budgets. However, her comments also ring true for the New York State budget.

Even in the COVID-19 era, New York has the third largest economy in the United States, and is about the same size as Canada’s and somewhat larger than Australia’s and much larger than the Netherlands’s.

Despite having a more productive economy, the poverty rate in New York is higher than Australia, Canada and the Netherlands. But New York spends a lower portion of its economic resources on the needs of children and families than Australia, Canada and the Netherlands.

In other words, New York has more resources, a higher proportion of children with unmet needs, but is doing less to help marginalized children than countries with similarly situated economies. Unsurprisingly, outcomes for children and adults are better in Australia, Canada and the Netherlands than in New York. For example, infant mortality is generally higher in New York and life expectancy is lower. New York can and must do better for our children.

The next sections of this report identify some of the most pressing needs for New York children. The Governor and the Legislature must adopt these proposals in the fiscal year 2022-23 budget. These proposals will set New York back on the path of leading the nation and the world in child well-being.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our New York State Children’s Budget for fiscal year 2022-23 provides a vision for the state to center children in this year’s budget. In order to achieve this vision, we provide recommendations related to racial justice, child welfare, economic mobility, education justice, health policy and youth justice. While these recommendations are not intended to be a complete set of policy solutions for child well-being in New York, they are robust and impactful.

Child well-being in New York begins with racial and ethnic equity. To begin to dismantle systemic racism in our legislative and rule-making process, Children’s Defense Fund-New York (CDF-NY) recommends establishing an independent office of racial and ethnic equity to draft racial and ethnic impact statements that analyze proposed legislation and rules.

Our Children’s Budget makes two key recommendations with respect to economic mobility for families with children. First, is an investment of \$5 billion to set New York on a path towards universal child care. The second recommendation in this area is reforming the Empire State Child Credit so that children under 4 are included, the credit is increased to more accurately reflect today’s costs associated with raising children, and that all families are included, regardless of immigration status.

Education funding is central to the state’s ability to meet the needs of children. This year is no different. That is why CDF-NY is calling for an additional \$1.6 billion in Foundation aid, increased funding for school meals and expanded funding for social workers in schools to meet the social-emotional needs of students.

With respect to health policy, we recommend a sea-change level investment of \$1 billion to help New York find and fix lead hazards in the state. Accompanying this bold investment, Our New York Children’s Budget also calls for expansion of health coverage, Medicaid funding for school health services and funding to study the quality and accessibility of telehealth services.

Significant budget investments are also needed this year to reform New York’s child welfare system. As part of these reforms, CDF-NY recommends the restoration of state reimbursement of 65% for children and family preventative services. CDF-NY also recommends a series of investments in children and families that are designed to better support children and families, including \$25 million to establish an independent and open-ended funding stream for KinGAP outside of the Foster Care Block Grant, and increased funding for the child welfare housing subsidy.

Finally, our children’s budget calls for better investments in the youth justice space, including increased funding for implementation of Raise the Age and state support for NYC implementation of close to home. Local governments should not be expected to implement these important programs without state help. New York should also continue to close more youth prisons and invest the savings in community-based programs.

# FY 2023 New York State Children’s Budget

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## RACIAL JUSTICE

### *Require Racial and Ethnic Impact Statements in the Legislative and Rule-making Process*

New York’s pervasive racial and ethnic disparities must be addressed through systemic change. **Our State can lead the nation in aiming towards equity in all policies by no longer passing legislation or adopting rules without first examining whether these policies will create, eliminate, or perpetuate racial and ethnic disparities.** This will require the state to produce and evaluate racial impact statements prior to passing laws or adopting new regulations. The legislature currently produces fiscal impact statements for legislation. State agencies currently produce a wide range of impact statements during rule-making—evaluating everything from the impact on the environment to the impact on small business. At no point, however, do the legislature or state agencies engage the same kind of publicly available analysis to ensure that our laws advance racial and ethnic equity and dismantle systemic racism.

To implement this approach, the state will need to invest more resources in the legislative and rule-making process. The evaluation of racial and ethnic impact also needs to be insulated from politics. This means the office producing the impact statements should be independent from both the legislature and the governor. The independent office model currently exists in other contexts in a variety of places. For example, the Congressional Budget Office is an independent legislative office that provides cost estimates for Congress. Neither house of Congress nor any political parties have control over the office. Similarly, the New York City Independent Budget Office is also structured in a way that insulates its work from the New York Mayor and City Council. Maintaining this type of independence will ensure that meaningful, unbiased impact statements will be produced.

## CHILD WELFARE

### *Establish the Children and Families Reinvestment Act*

To achieve a final enacted FY2023 state budget that centers children, youth, and families in communities, **we support the *Child and Families Reinvestment Act*** (Hevesi/Brisport), which calls for:

1. **Passing a Bold State Budget that Centers Children, Youth, and Families by Infusing Funds into Chronically Underfunded Programs.** New York State must:

- Reauthorize child welfare funding (Social Service Law §153-k), which sunsets 6/30/2022, and restore funding for children and family preventative services at the statutorily required 65%/35% reimbursement to counties.
- Fund KinGap outside the Foster Care Block Grant so that overburdened and budget-constrained counties are not forced to choose between spending limited funds on foster care or kinship care, and substantially increase financial supports that help children leave foster care and live with family.
- Increase funding for the NYS Unified Kinship Navigator system of care, expanding access to services and supports for children in kinship families who are not in foster care.
- Increase the child welfare housing subsidy to support families and older youth in foster care.
- Provide a stipend increase for foster parents.
- Provide funding for increasing salaries for equitable investment in the child welfare workforce.
- Invest in workforce training and education through the NYS Child Welfare Worker Incentive Scholarship Program and the NYS Child Welfare Worker Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program.
- Increase funding for, and expand access to, Advantage Afterschool and other out-of-school time funding streams, setting New York on a path to universal access.

**2. Creating a New Child and Family Wellbeing Fund.** This fund will create a flexible and innovative funding program to support efforts to respond to children’s and families’ needs in communities, with avenues for community input and accountability. The fund would invest new State dollars in local projects, such as the following:

- Family Resource/Enrichment Centers (FRCs/FECs) are a “hub” for families to partake in free opportunities specific to their community.
- New “home grown” models for programs supporting children, youth and families who have contact with the child welfare system and juvenile/criminal legal system, or who are served by multiple systems, including mental health.
- Community driven “whole child” approaches to primary prevention and neighborhood investment in child and family wellbeing.
- Direct cash support for youth and families.

**3. Creating a Universal Child Care System.** New York State is currently facing a child care crisis of limited availability and access, and must build a universal childcare system. These recommendations are discussed further in the *Economic Mobility* section.

### ***Re-Authorize Essential Child Welfare Funding and Invest 65% State Support for Preventive Services***

This fall, New York began implementing the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (“Family First”), creating an opportunity for the state to make strides toward transforming its child welfare system into one that is intentionally anti-racist, and committed to ensuring family self-

determination and strengthening community-based services that meet the needs of New York's diverse communities. At the same time, **New York State's prevention services statute is up for reauthorization, presenting an opportunity in New York to expand investment in family support.**

New York State currently invests state dollars in services for families to avoid deeper child welfare system involvement and to support children remaining safely in their homes. **This open-ended state reimbursement funding has contributed to the 59% reduction of children in foster care since 2010 through supports including housing assistance, child care, clinical services, home visiting, transportation, job training, education, and emergency cash grants.** Many of these kinds of resources are not eligible for federal reimbursement under Family First, making it a crucial state budget issue.

The enabling legislation for this important investment in family supports (Social Services Law Sec. 153-k) is subject to a sunset provision this year, and **New York State must reauthorize the statute and restore state funding at 65% to meet the full potential of its purpose by budgeting for the state share for these costs.** In state statute, the requirement is 65% funding, yet since 2008, the state has consistently reduced its share of reimbursement for these essential services to 62% each year—forcing counties to absorb a larger share of costs of serving families and children outside of foster care. **The FY2023 state budget must restore the reimbursement rate required under the original law.**

### ***Create Independent Funding For KinGAP So More Children Live with Family***

**The trauma that children separated from their family and placed in foster care experience can be mitigated when they are placed with family, preferably with relatives or someone with whom they have an existing relationship.** The Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) provides long-term support so children can leave foster care and live with kin. As more children in foster care are placed with relatives, KinGAP will become an increasingly important resource for achieving permanency.

KinGAP is under-utilized across the state. In 2019, there were 7,058 children in foster care with a relative, but only 526 (7%) children statewide left foster care via KinGAP. About 69% of those were in New York City. KinGAP is one proven strategy to reduce the over-representation of Black and brown New York children in foster care and to strengthen families. KinGAP also can reduce the amount of time children stay in foster care, and reduce the likelihood they will “age out” of care. When youth age out of foster care without returning to their family or having another form of permanency, they face devastating outcomes in education, employment, housing and justice-involvement, all of which disproportionately impact youth of color. New York State must invest in proven strategies, like KinGAP, that can prevent youth from exiting the system without permanent family supports.

**There is a clear opportunity to expand the use of KinGAP across the state. To do this, New York should fund KinGAP outside of the Foster Care Block Grant. To provide an avenue to**



permanency with kin for more children in foster care, New York State must invest \$25 million to establish an independent and open-ended funding stream for KinGAP outside of the Foster Care Block Grant.

### *Prioritize Housing for Families and Older Youth Leaving Foster Care and Increase the Child Welfare Housing Subsidy (A.1777-A Hevesi)*

The goal of the child welfare housing subsidy program is to stabilize housing for families and prevent family separation and child removals, expedite reunification of children in foster care, and help youth aging out of foster care who face high risk of housing instability and homelessness. Under this existing program, families with open CPS investigations, families receiving preventive services, families of children reunifying from foster care, and youth ages 18 through 21 are eligible for the housing subsidy through their local department of social services (LDSS). LDSSs are currently authorized to provide eligible families and youth with a housing subsidy of up to \$300 per month for up to three years or until reaching the limit of \$10,800.

The subsidy amount has not changed since it was created in 1988, although the law was recently amended to clarify that the subsidy can be used by families and youth living with roommates. With housing costs having increased exponentially since 1988, the low dollar amount has rendered the subsidy largely ineffective at achieving its intended purpose of stabilizing housing for child welfare system-involved families and young adults aging out of foster care. Moreover, while there are new federal housing vouchers and new state rent subsidies being funded by federal pandemic stimulus and recovery funds, many of those funding streams are temporary.

New York must prioritize new housing resources for families and older youth and **increase the child welfare housing subsidy from \$300 to \$725/month** and raise the total funds available to \$26,100 (\$725/month for a maximum of 36 months) as an additional resource counties can use when other housing subsidies are unavailable or as a bridge while families or youth are waiting to receive other longer term housing subsidies. **NYS must also build-in ongoing automatic increases to the subsidy, tying it to inflation, to ensure it meaningfully supports families as cost of living rises.**

## **ECONOMIC MOBILITY**

### *Provide Universal Child Care*

Nearly 1 in 5 children in New York live in child poverty. The numbers are even greater among families with young children. Contributing to the challenges of raising young children in New York is the lack of affordable, quality child care. Caregivers are forced to make difficult decisions about not paying other bills, taking on debt or doubling up in housing to pay for child care. Some mothers even forego work altogether because the cost of care exceeds what they earn in their own jobs. **Making matters worse, New York's current child care subsidy system does not even reach all the families who are eligible for it because it is systemically underfunded.**

Our 2019 report on reducing child poverty, produced in collaboration with the Urban Institute, found that New York could cut its child poverty rate by 12 percent simply by fully funding its child care subsidy program at current eligibility levels.<sup>1</sup> While these results are impressive and would alleviate significant financial burdens for many families, New York should not stop there. Child care assistance helps parents earn greater income by allowing them to work more. This improves the economic well-being for the family and everyone in the community. Expanded access to child care assistance is particularly important for families who have historically been economically disadvantaged, including low- and middle-income people of color. The expansion should also be available to all families, regardless of immigration status. **These policies will empower all families to make child care choices that best suit their needs, which will allow many more families to advance economically. This is why New York must invest \$5 billion to support universal child care.**

Specific allocations of the funding should include \$3 billion for child care subsidies for families most in need; \$1 billion for a worker compensation fund to ensure Black women and other women of color in particular are appropriately compensated for their work; \$400 million to support child care infrastructure expansion to provide care for families who work evenings and nights; and \$600 million for child care reimbursement transformation payments to transition reimbursement away from the current funding structure.

### *Reform New York's Tax Code to End Child Poverty in New York State*

**New York must reform its tax code to reduce child poverty, promote racial equity and move more families towards economic security.** Our State must bolster the **Empire State Child Credit** by: (1) expanding it to include children under 4 as well as 17-year-olds, (2) increasing the value of the credit to \$1,000 for young children and \$500 for older children, and (3) making the full credit available to New York's lowest-income families by ending both the exclusion of families with incomes under \$3,000 and the gradual phase-in for the lowest income families. New York must also expand the **Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)** by: (1) raising the state's match from 30 percent to 45 percent of the federal program, (2) extending the EITC to childless workers under age 25, and (3) making the EITC available to more immigrant New Yorkers by adjusting filing requirements to mimic those of the Empire State Child Credit.

## **EDUCATION JUSTICE**

### *Improve Student Outcomes Through Foundation Aid*

**New York's Black, Brown, Latinx, immigrant, and children with disabilities attend schools that lack equitable funding and resources. The final enacted budget must include a \$1.6 billion increase in Foundation Aid and \$2.1 billion increase for public schools to allow us to begin to move our education system forward and address the needs of our children and their families.**

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<sup>1</sup> Ending Child Poverty Now, Children's Defense Fund, 2019, <https://www.childrensdefense.org/wpcontent/uploads/2019/04/Ending-Child-Poverty-2019.pdf>.

### *Support Free School-Based Meals*

**Continue to address food inequities through the continuation of free school meals for all children** in New York public schools regardless of their socioeconomic status. This program will benefit approximately three million students attending 6,000 schools in New York State.

### *Support Universal After School*

In New York for every one child in afterschool, four children are not. **Research shows that after-school programming keeps children engaged in learning, increases long-term earning potential, reduces children's interaction with the criminal justice system, and provides meaningful interaction with their peers.** In 2019, 666,896 children (23%) would have been enrolled in a summer program if one were available to them. We urge the legislature to invest in our children in all aspects of their lives.

### *Expand Culturally Responsive Curricula and Training*

**Invest in and expand support for culturally responsive education, so that students see themselves reflected in a relevant curriculum that is meaningful to their interests and communities.** A curriculum that reflects students' identities demonstrates that students are valued and builds a sense of connectedness to school. This requires that our educators be equipped to be anti-racist, antisexist, and youth-centered and to offer high-quality, transformative, culturally relevant educational experiences to all.

### *Expand Mental Health Supports*

1. Guidance counselors and social workers are a crucial part of our education system. **As students grapple with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and their own social-emotional development, it is imperative that we fully fund our mental health support infrastructure in our schools.** New York State must move towards the national recommendation of student support staff ratio of 1:250 and 1:50 for students with intensive needs.
2. **Pass Mental Health Supports in Schools (A.5019/S.1969)** to ensure **all elementary, middle, and high schools in New York State have a full-time licensed social worker and a full-time licensed psychologist on staff to meet the needs of their students.** New York must expand the type of school mental health services provided by a licensed clinical social worker or certified school social worker in order to diagnose or address mental, social, emotional, behavioral, and developmental conditions and disabilities.

### *Invest in Reducing Class Size*

**Smaller classes have also been found to have a positive impact on school climate, student socio-emotional growth, safety and suspension rates, parent engagement, and teacher attrition,** especially in schools with a predominant Black and brown populations. We call upon the governor and legislature to invest more funding into reducing class sizes across New York; and specifically, New York City where class sizes are 21% larger than the rest of the state.

## HEALTH JUSTICE

### *End Childhood Lead Poisoning in New York*

**New York has more children with elevated blood lead levels than any other state. Lead exposure rates in some parts of New York are 5 to 6 times higher than those in Flint, Michigan at the height of its lead crisis, with poor children and children of color disproportionately impacted by lead exposure and poisoning.** To reduce lead exposure, New York must:

1. Enact and fund proactive rental inspections to find lead hazards before they harm children.
2. Establish minimum maintenance standards for lead hazards in housing.
3. Adopt a state Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) rule (*S. 6554 Bailey / A. 7117 Bronson*).
4. Require testing for lead before homes are sold (*S. 2142-A Kavanagh / A. 6608-A Rivera*).
5. Prohibit insurance carriers from excluding coverage for lead exposure from landlord liability policies (*S. 3079 Ryan / A. 7488 Rivera*).
6. Pass Dakota's Law (*S. 5024-B Rivera / A. 7325-A Peoples-Stokes*) with data collection improvements.

New York must make bold investments to combat childhood lead poisoning. **Our State must allocate \$1 billion in the FY 2022-2023 State Budget for lead poisoning elimination** and appropriate this fund as follows:

1. \$100 Million for LeadWeb Expansion and Program Oversight | Department of Health
2. \$200 Million for Local County Lead Prevention Program | Department of Health
3. \$500 Million for the Lead Repair/Renovation Program | Division of Housing and Community Renewal
4. \$60 Million for the Lead/Environmental Threat Elimination Training Program | Department of Labor
5. \$100 Million Lead/Environmental Hazard Program | Department of Labor
6. \$40 Million Lead/Environmental Threat Elimination Training Program | State University of New York Community Colleges

Additionally, the State must direct the Department of Health to submit a Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) State Plan Amendment (SPA) establishing a Health Service Initiative (HSI) leveraging \$25 million in lead poisoning prevention funds to draw down \$50 million in federal matching funds, making \$75 million available.

### *Expand Health Coverage for Children and Families*

Despite the coverage gains our State has made in recent years, too many New York families still lack affordable and comprehensive health coverage. Furthermore, coverage options remain fragmented and confusing. Today, over 100,000 New York children remain uninsured. While most of these children are eligible for coverage, families are often unaware of their options or

afraid to seek coverage because of their immigration status. New York has numerous policy options to overcome these barriers, not the least of which is passage of the **New York Health Act** (S. 5474 Rivera / A. 6058 Gottfried), which will provide universal coverage for all New Yorkers. Health coverage for children and families could also be improved by:

- **Extending post-pregnancy Medicaid coverage to one year for all women regardless of their immigration status** (S. 1411A Rivera / A. 3079A Gottfried)
- Allocating \$13 million to create a temporary state-funded Essential Plan for New Yorkers who earn up to 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, have had COVID-19 and are excluded from coverage due to immigration status. By doing so, our State can cover over 5,000 uninsured New Yorkers who have suffered directly from the pandemic and may require ongoing care to fully recover and provide for their families.
- Increasing the health insurance navigator budget from \$27.2M to \$32M to guarantee high-quality enrollment services and provide an additional \$5M for community-based organizations to educate consumers about coverage options, particularly amidst a rise in insurance churn as unemployed New Yorkers seek out health coverage.
- **Eliminating the \$9 premium for Child Health Plus enrollees whose families earn below 250 percent of the Federal Poverty Level and expanding Child Health Plus benefits to ensure the children who use it receive all the care they need.** Benefits that should be added include medically necessary orthodontia, Children and Family Treatment and Support Services, expanded services for undocumented children in foster care, and emergency ambulance transportation and medical supplies.
- **Implementing continuous Medicaid eligibility for infants in their first three years of life.**

### **Telehealth Equity**

Telehealth holds great potential to improve access to critical health services during the pandemic and beyond, particularly for New Yorkers facing barriers to in-person visits and those living in areas with provider shortages. **As New Yorkers of all ages increasingly turn to telehealth, it is incumbent upon our State to ensure equity, access and quality in telehealth service provision, particularly for our Black and Brown communities who are disparately affected by the digital divide and for vulnerable youth in need of behavioral health services who may not be receiving them via telehealth for a variety of reasons.** Accordingly, we urge the Legislature to provide funding in the FY 2022-2023 Budget for an independent evaluation of the equity, access and quality of telehealth services being delivered to New Yorkers, particularly for behavioral health services.

### **Support School-Based Health Services**

\$5M in permanent funding is needed to restore FY 2018-19 cuts to New York's **school-based health centers (SBHCs)**, which provide critical health services to students in medically underserved communities, thereby improving both health and educational outcomes.

### *Expand the Population of Students Receiving Medicaid-Covered School Health Services*

To provide critical health services to New York's most marginalized children and to take full advantage of federal Medicaid reimbursement, our State should amend its Medicaid State Plan so that **public schools can become approved locations where health services can be provided to all Medicaid-enrolled students**, not just to students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

## YOUTH JUSTICE

### *Increase Funding for Raise the Age Implementation and Ensure Community-Based Organizations Can Access Funds*

We must **increase funding for Raise the Age implementation and for diversion and alternative to incarceration programs statewide**, and make these dollars as well as existing funding streams such as the Supervision and Treatment Services for Juveniles Program **as flexible as possible so funding can be accessed by small community-based organizations closest to the young people they serve**. New York City should no longer be excluded from the Raise the Age funds, as it has since the law was enacted in 2017.

### *Restore State funding for New York City's Close to Home Initiative and incentivize other counties to implement similar programs*

Supported by rigorous research, **New York City's Close to Home (CTH) program has reduced the number of adolescents who have been sent to upstate youth prisons to nearly zero**, even though Raise the Age has increased the number of older youth eligible for local placement in CTH agencies. **Despite its record of success and the program's recent reauthorization, the State has refused to support New York City's youth placed in CTH, shifting its full cost to New York City**. This should be remedied with the State budget this year, and the State should pay its fair share, as it does in every other County in New York, for this care. **Moreover, the State should create financial incentives for counties outside of New York City to establish similar models based on Close to Home, to keep more youth closer to family, school and community, and reduce reliance on expensive State-operated juvenile placement facilities.**

### *Close more youth prisons and ensure that 100% of the dollars saved are reinvested in communities*

**Between 2007 and 2013, the State closed 23 state-operated youth prison facilities** and reduced capacity in others. Overall, the Office of Children and Family Services reduced its residential capacity by more than 1,000 beds, which was part of a steep reduction in family court placements that continued for a decade. **We also saw a decrease in arrests among youth under 18 during this time. These kinds of closures provide an opportunity for reinvestment in mental health,**

**family supports and youth development programming to further reduce reliance on the carceral system and to decarcerate more youth.**

**Today the costs associated with placements in New York are nearly \$900,000 per child per year.** Following the OCFS facility closures in 2012, a new fund was created (**the Supervision and Treatment Services for Juveniles Program**) to push more state dollars into counties to support prevention, alternatives to detention/placement, and reentry services. **This is one of the most important mechanisms for reducing youth incarceration as communities develop programs that courts can rely on instead of sending youth to OCFS-operated facilities.**

Services that provide for young people and their families in or close to their communities have been shown to be more effective in delivering long term community safety. Moreover, juvenile placement facilities are the site for extreme racial disproportionality. During 2019, almost 75% of children admitted to Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) custody were Black or Latinx, while they represent only 40% of New York's children. **Working toward building stronger community-based alternatives and closing state facilities is a crucial step for youth justice reform and racial equity in New York.**

### ***Pass Clean Slate Legislation***

Criminal records create life-long hurdles, restrict opportunities, and undermine economic mobility and success for families across generations, pushing them deeper into poverty. This legislation must be considered not only in the context of individuals with criminal records, but also the impact of record sealing on children and families. **Clean Slate is a crucial step toward racial and economic justice, addressing some of the deep racial disparities that are evident at every stage of the criminal legal system, and providing pathways to more full participation in our neighborhoods and communities, which is essential to the well-being of children, youth and families.**

One of the most significant effects of a criminal conviction is exposure to the civil consequences which can permanently impair one's future, even if the individual never reoffends. The Council of State Governments has found 1,052 civil consequences of conviction in New York. These legal and regulatory sanctions and restrictions attach to both felony and misdemeanor convictions and affect people's lives in a wide range of ways, including the ability to access and keep jobs, housing, loans, credit, and education. These consequences ensure that punishments last far beyond the term of any court-imposed sanction, essentially becoming a life sentence of stigma and lost opportunity that impact individuals and their families.

**Research shows the deleterious intergenerational effects of parental criminal records across different domains of family well-being:** income, savings and assets, education, housing, and family strength and stability. The impacts of having a criminal record do not disappear after one generation; rather, **they continue to cause disadvantage for children and families.**

**Clean Slate is also a critical reform in youth justice, providing relief for people convicted of crimes as young people.** Creating lifelong barriers for behavior that has been shown, for the most part, to be time-limited is an unnecessarily harsh consequence and fails to support true community safety. **Record sealing for people with convictions as adolescents and young adults will allow many young people to meaningfully join the workforce and contribute to our communities.** Moreover, given the well-documented disproportionate impact of the criminal legal system on Black and Latinx youth, Clean Slate offers another policy remedy to help decrease the obstacles to their success.

## CONCLUSION

Marian Wright Edelman could not have been clearer when she said, “[w]e don’t have a money problem. We have a profound values and priorities problem, and we need to change it in the budgets.” The fiscal picture for New York State this year is no different. For the first time in over half a decade, New York is facing a fiscal surplus. The state must take advantage of this opportunity and center children and families in the budget. This means providing universal child care, reforming our tax system, increasing education spending, expanding health coverage and services, investing in community-based services that keep families together, and re-committing ourselves to Raise the Age and Close to Home. These investments are the most important things the Governor and Legislature can do to end child poverty and improve child well-being. We clearly have the resources, we just need the political will to put our children first.





The Children's Defense Fund – New York envisions a State and a Nation where marginalized children flourish, leaders prioritize their well-being and communities wield the power to ensure they thrive.



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