



CHAMPS-NY Response to State of the State 2022

Significant NYS investments needed in strategies proven to strengthen and empower families, reduce longstanding racial inequities in child welfare, and set up New York children to thrive

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[CHAMPS-NY](#), a statewide coalition of organizations, providers, advocates, and impacted parents and youth representing children and families involved in New York State's child welfare system, applauds Governor Hochul's attention to issues of equity and economic security in her first State of the State address on Wednesday, and for strong proposals to address the mental health crisis facing the state's youth.

Unmentioned in Governor's Hochul's address or State of the State book, however, were children and families involved in the child welfare system – New Yorkers who are too often overlooked and underserved.

Looking ahead to the Governor's Executive Budget, due to be released later this month, we urge significant investments in strategies proven to strengthen and empower families, reduce longstanding racial inequities in child welfare, and set up New York children to thrive, including:

- **Establishing an Office of the Child Welfare Advocate,**
- **Reauthorizing and fully funding preventive services,**
- **Reducing out-of-state and in-state congregate care placements, especially among children age 13 and younger.**

This is a pivotal year for child welfare in New York State. Fall 2021 brought implementation of the first phase of the historic federal Family First Prevention Services Act; this spring, New York must reauthorize its hugely successful child welfare preventive services program. Both position New York State to transform the child welfare system into one that improves family well-being and self-determination, increases non-coercive support, and strengthens community-based services that meet the needs of our diverse communities. We cannot miss this opportunity to attack the disproportionate racial disparities in child welfare by resourcing and supporting children and families involved or at-risk of being involved in the system.

A NYS **Office of the Child Welfare Advocate** would help families understand how to exercise their rights, provide much-needed information and referral to services, and clarify policies and options available to children and families that get caught up in the complicated system. By establishing an Office of Child Welfare Advocate, New York would join the 36 other states with similar offices and offer an indispensable resource for all New York youth and families touched by the child welfare system. We urge inclusion of funding to establish the Office (**A6269-A**) in the Executive Budget.

An Office of the Child Welfare Advocate Will Help New York Build a More Family-Centered, Equitable Child Welfare System

- The Office of the Child Welfare Advocate will be a publicly accountable office that can neutrally and impartially mediate conflict, provide information, and protect the interests and rights of youth, biological parents, foster parents, kin caregivers and relatives involved in the child welfare system
- The Office will improve oversight and the accountability and responsiveness of New York's child welfare system.

Other policies New York State should advance this session to build a more family-centered, equitable child welfare system include:

- Reauthorizing and fully funding preventive services that help ensure more New York families get the support they need to stay together and thrive.
- Curtailing use of congregate care placements, particularly for young children, and enhancing foster care payment rates for families fostering children who would otherwise go into congregate care.

[View CHAMPS-NY's full 2022 Policy Priorities.](#)

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***CHAMPS-NY** is a statewide group of advocates, providers, and impacted New Yorkers working to promote state policy and practice change that ensures that when children must enter foster care, they are placed into family-based settings whenever possible, and that their caregivers are supported so that children experience the best possible permanency and well-being outcomes.*

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