



**Testimony of UFT Vice President for Non-DOE Members Anne Goldman  
before the New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council /Council on  
Children and Families**

February 28, 2017

Good afternoon. My name is Anne Goldman and I am the Vice President for non-Department of Education members of the United Federation of Teachers. We proudly represent 15,000 home-based family child care providers located in all five boroughs of our great city. Our members — mostly women of color — provide home-based family child care for thousands of New York City parents.

First, I would like to thank Sherry Cleary from the New York State Council on Children and Families (CCF), Patricia Persell from the New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, and the members of the New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council for convening this public hearing so that we may discuss opportunities to improve the quality of and access to early childhood care and education programs.

Further, I would be remiss, if I didn't acknowledge our collaborative relationship with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services under the leadership of Acting Commissioner Sheila Poole. I would also like to thank the agency for hosting us for today's community forum to discuss the impact of federal changes on our providers and strategies to improve child care services. Over the course of the past year, we've made great strides together, particularly with Deputy Commissioner Janice Molnar and her team. We're strengthening the home-based child care profession with a special emphasis on aligning our evidence-based professional learning and curriculum development to the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children. We certainly look forward to our continuing partnership and extending our Memorandum of Understanding into 2018 and beyond.

Home-based family child care is an essential component of the city's subsidized child care system, which serves more than 300,000 children. These educators and caretakers for our earliest learners make it possible for low-income families to maintain employment and lead lives of relative stability. The dividend for our families and communities: their children are better prepared to enter school, do better in school as compared to children who do not attend quality early childhood programs and possess the firm foundation for more successful outcomes in school and in life.

The policies and regulations we will discuss today govern an arena in which poverty permeates every aspect of life for the parents and the children who use the services of home-based family care providers. Your policies, in fact, touch multiple constituencies. The child-care services help sustain an oft-times fragile community economy. Plus, New York City and our state thrive when its population is working. We have seen the effect on our taxes and the levels of government assistance when unemployment goes up. Moreover, we know what happens when children go to school without any preparation.

We get it. Affordable child care comes with significant costs. The financial support to maintain professional and affordable care — the care that enables our providers to operate competitively in the marketplace — stretches the state's tight resources. We're pragmatic in our approach to the realities, recognizing the constraints that the Office for Children and Family Services is up against as it tries to do more with less. In the spirit of collaborative partnership, we offer some thoughts on key elements for your consideration for the upcoming fiscal year.

## **How OCFS can help**

We know our model of home-based care, supported by rigorous, on-going professional learning serves children better and enhances their chances for success. That is why we look to the New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council to support our recommendations for how the Office of Children and Family Services can help us improve child care services and better address the effects of federal mandates.

We urge the Office of Children and Family Service to:

- a) Support a \$100 million funding request for child care. This financial support would include, but not be limited to: financing more vouchers to meet the need of more parents; expanding our provider pool and introducing more user-friendly technology to aid providers with instruction;
- b) Reduce restrictive regulations that make compliance difficult and are more punitive than instructive or developmental;
- c) Advance a culturally-sensitive approach in all policies, communications, case management, corrective measures, and the like;
- d) Enable providers to care for children longer; and
- e) Provide evidence-based, high-quality professional learning opportunities to better equip our home-based members to deliver age-appropriate skills instruction to children in their care.

We stand ready to work together with the state's Office for Children and Family Services and the New York City Administration for Children's Services. As educators and health care professionals, we, at the UFT, firmly believe that these children, some with the highest needs, can thrive when both state and city agencies place a greater emphasis on properly supporting the home-based providers as well as their parents.



## **Reduce restrictive regulations**

As educators and care providers, we know the importance of ensuring all early learners receive high-quality day care with age-appropriate instruction that meets their social-emotional and academic needs. Our state laws and federal mandates provide assurances for New York state parents and all tax payers that providers of these services are qualified and comply with regulations. Our concerns rest with the application of these laws and the punitive measures meted out when shortfalls occur.

In testimony just last year, we raised concerns regarding the logistics of ramping up in a timely and effective manner, compliance with the federal benchmarks set for provider training, on-site inspections, and background checks.

What we fear has evolved however, is a “gotcha” system that serves no one well — not parents, not home-based care providers and not the children. From our viewpoint, the state is ineffective when it attempts to scare our members into compliance. When regulations are too rigid and the penalties and fines are too steep, unintended consequences arise. Rather than guaranteeing quality care in monitored settings, it drive home-based caregivers to work under the radar or out of the marketplace altogether.

Our union believes in a productive approach where more user-friendly corrective instruction, geared to developing best practices, creates positive outcomes. Ultimately with this approach, the system supports the providers and reinforces good decision making and diligent follow-up on regulations and procedures.

We continue to recommend the council works with the Office of Children and Family Services to engage all stakeholders, particularly from the home-based arena, to fine-tune the existing comprehensive plan for implementation of regulations and compliance measures.

## **Professional development pays dividends**

Educating and caring for our earliest learners is a high priority for the UFT. The professional development and credentialing services we provide to our union’s family child care providers demonstrates our mission. The exemplary work developed by the Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention (TACSEI) and the Center for the Emotional and Educational Foundation for Early Learning (CSEFE) makes the case for creating targeted instruction and interventions for early learners. Child development and education research has begun to focus more on younger children, those ages one to three. Here is where our licensed home-based providers can significantly contribute to early education.

The Early Childhood Advisory Council certainly understands that the children our members serve face achievement gaps, largely due to poverty. That’s why we’ve invested time and resources creating partnerships to deliver professional learning for our home-based members.

We've partnered with curriculum development teams from public television, the American Federation of Teachers, our parent union and the UFT Teacher Center to deliver age-appropriate instructional support for our members in home-based settings. Most notably, the UFT Teacher Center through its utilization of the competencies illustrated in the Pyramid Model mentioned earlier, created curriculum for children two- to three-years-old centered around social-emotional learning with an additional component on autism.

Additionally, we've introduced the Successful Beginnings for Early Literacy Development (SBELD) — a Teacher Center-developed curriculum geared to preparing three-year-olds for kindergarten with supports and resources for our care providers. Further, we are particularly proud of our embedded coaching program. Teacher Center instructional coaches demonstrate how to use the curricula and show providers how to adopt and sustain evidence-based best practices in their homes.

Our annual Early Childhood Conference held in March offers workshops for our early childhood education providers. Examples include using building blocks to solve problems, employing storytelling as an instructional technique, engaging English language learners and demonstrating how geometry can be used to aid language development. Plus, we have assisted members in their pursuit of national accreditation with the National Association for Family Child Care.

Supporting ongoing professional learning is not just a feel-good notion. It gets results. Our providers are on the front line for identifying children with developmental delays. We train our providers to observe development benchmarks and notice when children are not thriving.

We also can't ignore the opportunity presented by advances in technology and interactive media. As detailed in the position paper, *Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8*, "The shift to new media literacies and the need for digital literacy that encompasses both technology and media literacy will continue to shape the world in which young children are developing and learning." <sup>1</sup>

Utah achieved promising literacy results by introducing a computer-based early learning program. UPSTART — Utah Preparing Students Today for a Rewarding Tomorrow — "consists of computer-based lessons, games, books, and activities that stress phonics, phonemic awareness, comprehension, and vocabulary and language concepts." <sup>2</sup>

At the end of the day, we're creating greater equity for the children in our care. Through our workshops and professional development sessions, we help providers bridge the gap for children in need. The UFT encourages the state to fund training for our family day care providers so early interventions can be implemented.

## **Provide greater access**

We need to provide greater access to professional state supported home-based child care. Expanding access to early child care, we believe, is an economic and educational imperative for all of the reasons we've detailed in our testimony.

Unfortunately, too few New York City working families can afford early child care without financial assistance. While thousands of low-income New Yorkers, predominantly families of color, depend on family child providers, according to the city only 27 percent of income-eligible families currently receive child care subsidies. Our city has fallen woefully short in meeting the need.

We hardly need to tell you what that means: Without the state's help, these parents cannot afford professional day care. The parents need and their children deserve quality caregivers who meet state standards.

## **Enhance cultural sensitivity**

In closing, we would like to emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity as we approach this work. Increasingly our parents and caregivers migrate from an ever expanding landscape of nations and cultures. Engaging them in ways that promote comfort and understanding will deepen their connection to guiding regulations and make them better ambassadors for best practices in early child care development. The language we use in our documents, the roll-out of mandates, the corrective measures employed can all be tempered through enhanced cultural competence on the part of oversight agencies. There's a human factor, after all. The federal government has now handed us a bill for tens, maybe hundreds, of millions of dollars in unfunded mandates. The last time this happened — can anyone here say Common Core without cringing? — the state wasted hundreds of millions of dollars on failed policies in poorly implemented educational programs.

In closing, affordable child care for all eligible working families is a realistic goal. The immediate and long-term benefits for children and working parents are clear. Let's work together in partnership to support our children, families and child care providers.

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### **Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> "Utah Finds Computer-Based Early-Learning Program Offers Literacy Boost," Christina Samuels, *EdWeek*, May 17, 2016

<sup>2</sup> "Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8," National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media at St. Vincent College, joint position statement, Jan. 2012

