

Office of the Nassau County Comptroller

Jack Schnirman — Comptroller

Nassau County Comptroller Jack Schnirman Announces Release of Report on Child Care

With COVID-19 highlighting critical importance of child care, report details the economic effects of the high costs and highlights specific potential public policy solutions.

Mineola, NY – Nassau County Comptroller Jack Schnirman announced the release of a report on the price and availability of child care by the Policy and Research Unit of the Nassau County Comptroller’s Office. The report, titled “The Child Care Gap: How the Price of Child Care Impacts ‘The Deal’ of Living in Nassau County” explores how the price and accessibility of child care threaten economic sustainability for Nassau County’s families and the impact on our local economy as well as highlighting best practices around the country that can help make affordable child care more accessible in Nassau County.

The Nassau County Comptroller’s Office began to develop this report in early 2020 and assembled key stakeholders who have already been advocating for solutions to detail the realities that they saw on the ground. The spread of COVID-19 forced the conversation on child care to address a new reality.

“With COVID-19 exacerbating the challenge of child care, and even shedding light on how dependent many already were on our education system to effectively serve as child care, the critical look this report takes and success models it highlights are even more relevant to policymakers,” said **Nassau County Comptroller Jack Schnirman**. “COVID-19 has put child care providers front and center in this crisis - helping define for health care workers, critical laborers, grocery and transit workers and families exactly who is an essential worker, and thus it is even more crucial to highlight this need.”

“For many Long Island families, finding quality affordable child care and early childhood education is a serious challenge and the financial hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic further demonstrates the need for stronger support for families,” said

United States Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. “We must pass legislation that invests in every family and child, that guarantees access to affordable child care, universal pre-K and paid medical and family leave. America and New York can’t succeed unless families do.”

“The economic wounds brought on by COVID-19 have already been felt by millions of Americans. Those wounds will outlast the virus and have brought to light the shortcomings of our current childcare system as essential workers scrambled to find solutions as society began to shut down. However, this report gives us a glimmer of hope at a time when we need it,” said **John R. Durso**,

President of the Long Island Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO. "It demonstrates a significant return on investments when they expand access to affordable quality child care. And, it highlights best practices from around the country giving us a roadmap to support working families and small businesses during difficult economic times."

The report details that child care, an \$800 million industry on Long Island with 9,000 jobs, has one of the highest economic multipliers of all sectors in the region with a return of \$1.95 for every \$1 invested. Despite this, only 10% of 4 year-olds on Long Island have access to publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs, compared to universal access in New York City.

"It's disappointing to see only 10% of 4 years olds on Long Island are eligible for a full-day, state-funded, Pre-K program while 35% have access to half day Pre- K programs. Pre-K is critical to ensuring all children have a head start to education. As an educator, I witnessed firsthand when a child had access to early education and/or early intervention as their social and academic skills were more developed. It is important we invest equitably in our children across the state," stated **New York State Senator Monica R. Martinez.**

"The work that we've been doing on a regional basis to connect childcare, early education Pre-K public schools and community resources has pointed out over and over that there is a great need for additional funding and collaboration across all sectors. The partnerships and relationships established through the Long Island Pre-K Initiative and our new Long Island Regional Technical Assistance Center for Pre-K and Early Education have proven invaluable as we respond to current challenges," said **Lucinda Hurley, Long Island Pre-K Initiative Coordinator.** "All Long Island residents benefit from investments in early education and support for families, whether they realize it or not. As a county, region and State we have to do a better job."

Statewide, child care is paid primarily through private fees (85%), unlike public education. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services only 9.4% of New York State families have access to "affordable" child care, as affordable child care is defined as costing no more than 7% of a family's income.

The cost of child care for an infant in the state exceeds \$15,000 annually, which is 93.9% higher, or \$7,456 more, than in-state tuition for SUNY; the cost for a toddler exceeds \$13,000 annually. This underscores that the cost of child care in New York State exceeds public university tuition.

Based on data from the Long Island Regional Economic Development Council, infant care for one child would take up 22.1% of the median family's income, 36% of gross income for a single parent earning \$50,000 a year, or 66.7% of a minimum-wage income. These costs are expected to increase by an average of \$468 per year, with projections for the next decade showing child care costs exceeding 16% of the median family income.

"It is imperative that we address the childcare crisis in proportion to the economic risk it poses to our region. Quality childcare is a critical component of the economic vitality of our community," declared **Assemblymember Michaelle Solages.** "I applaud Comptroller Schnirman for highlighting the crucial need for substantial legislative action on this issue, and I look forward to collaborating with all of the stakeholders involved to expand on our grassroots efforts in Albany."

“Expanding access to child care services for working-class families is essential to the growth of our economy and the cognitive development of Long Island’s most cherished asset, our children. I thank Comptroller Schnirman and his office for their work in issuing this report to shine light on the critical issues surrounding access to quality, affordable child care, and I look forward to continuing to work with all stakeholders to help close these service gaps and build more economic opportunity for our families and our region,” said **Assemblymember Kimberly Jean-Pierre**.

Nassau County currently has 43,652 total child care slots, with 39,034 available in Suffolk. However, 138,241 slots are needed, with 93,550 slots necessary to accommodate all children six-years-old and under with both parents in the workforce. Census Bureau data showed that a million part-time workers cited child care issues as their primary reason for not working full-time and 8.7 percent of families had someone quit a job, not take a job, or change jobs in the last year due to child care challenges.

“As a parent of two kids under the age of 5, child care is a challenge in daily life. As a Comptroller, the numbers show that making affordable child care more accessible is crucial as we work to update 'The Deal' for families living in Nassau County,” concluded **Nassau County Comptroller Jack Schnirman**. “Parents know that they need to spend years saving money so that their children can afford a college education, but many do not expect the cost of child care to rival that. Aside from helping individuals better support their families, accessible child care fuels economic growth. With Nassau County residents stretched too thin, closing the child care gap just makes plain economic sense.”

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