



Leadership, voice and vision for child welfare in New York State

MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

A.3411 DARLING/S.3101 BRISPORT

AN ACT to amend the social services law, in relation to increasing salaries for foster care direct care workers; and making an appropriation therefor

The Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) strongly supports A.3411/S.3101 sponsored by Assemblywoman Darling and Senator Brisport which would to provide critical salary enhancements for direct care workers employed by voluntary foster care agencies across NYS.

The State has made significant progress in reducing the number of youth placed in the foster care system. We have seen a 58% decline in the number of children and youth entering the foster care system statewide in the last 20 years. As the voluntary agencies, counties, and state work together to facilitate the provision of services in the home and community where possible, we have seen that needs of the population that are being referred to out of home placements are demonstrably more significant. Today in NYS, approximately 15,600 children and youth are in the state's foster care system, approximately 80% of whom are in the care of the nonprofit voluntary foster care agencies.

We cannot continue to under-support the professionals who are doing this critical, challenging work. Our direct care workers continued to come to work every day throughout the pandemic, to care for children and youth in foster care, and are part of our essential workforce. While other essential workers have been recognized or provided enhanced salary payments in other human service programs (i.e., OPWDD, OMH, and OASAS), direct care staff, case workers/case planners and their supervisors have not received the same type of support through the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS).

Our COFCCA Workforce Study, conducted every other year, shows that caseworkers in 2020 across child welfare programs (family foster care, prevention, and residential foster care programs) earned an average annual starting salary statewide of \$40,752 with a Bachelor's degree and \$44,802 with a Master's Degree. A comparable state level worker earns more than \$24,000 more than workers in our settings.

Additionally, as the difference in salary between our workers and the minimum wage further compresses without additional resources to address the increases, we will continue to see workers are turning elsewhere for higher pay and less stressful jobs. In 2020, our front line, child care

workers in residential foster care earned an average statewide starting salary of \$30,361—or approximately \$14.60 per hour. Many of our residential care workers, have to hold two jobs to support their families, and as the economy improves, workers are turning elsewhere for higher pay and less stressful jobs. The average turnover rate for these employees was an astounding 49.4%.

Staff turnover impacts treatment and causes longer lengths of stay for children in foster care - this is an unacceptable outcome for New York's children and families, and it is costly for the state and counties as it extends a child's time in care.

COFCCA strongly supports A.3411/S.3101, which would raise salaries to be equitable with public sector salaries to make a job in the non-profit child welfare sector more competitive, allowing programs to attract and keep diverse, highly educated and trained candidates, and to reap enormous benefits for the children and youth served. COFCCA encourages the Legislature to pass this bill.

For more information please contact Michelle Newman, at mnewman@cofcca.org or (212) 929-2626.

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