October 17, 2013

Governor Andrew Cuomo
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

RE: A.3498-a (Peoples-Stokes)/S.5743 (Grisanti/Montgomery)

Dear Governor Cuomo,

I am writing on behalf of Winning Beginning NY to respectfully request that you sign this critically important legislation that will provide both parents and child care provider businesses with significantly more time to plan in the face of a child care subsidy reduction or co-payment increase. Receiving such information earlier than currently required will go a long way toward mitigating the negative financial impact of the change by providing parents with more time to find a less expensive, quality child care situation. It will also provide child care providers additional time to ensure that there are children in place to fill the open child care slots, so that revenue is not lost.

The bill will accomplish this by requiring local social services districts to notify the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) at least 60 days prior to a proposed change in eligibility levels or increase in parental co-payment for child care assistance. OCFS will, in turn, post this information on its website within 5 days of receiving the information and will notify all child care resource and referral organizations, licensed, registered and legally exempt child care providers, and the unions representing them, within 20 days by e-mail or by regular mail. In turn, child care providers are asked to post the proposed change within their place of business and on their websites, to inform parents of the impending change.

This desperately needed legislation imposes no additional costs on local districts. Local districts already provide advance notice in the form of a proposed plan amendment to OCFS when they increase child care copayments. When districts lower eligibility levels, this bill would simply require that the local district send a fax or e-mail to OCFS. OCFS can in turn meet its obligations by e-mail. Furthermore, because this is not an individualized notice to parents, it provides no additional fair hearing rights so there will be no corresponding increase in fair hearing requests.

Most importantly, the bill is critical to the safety and well-being of New York’s children as well as the financial stability of parents and child care providers. Currently, the regulations require that a notice be mailed ten days in advance of a change in copayment or loss of eligibility. Ten days, but more often less than a week, is simply not enough time for parents to adequately advance plan to pay more for child care assistance or find another provider to watch their children while they work. Under current policy, families have been forced to quit their jobs or place their children in unsafe child care settings, due to lack of time to adjust to the change. By requiring local social services to notify OCFS 60 days before the change, it will
enable both families and child care providers to make the necessary adjustments to their schedules, arrange for alternative transportation needs, adjust staffing needs and complete any other required changes.

Millions of families across New York State rely upon quality day care, on a daily basis, while they are working one or several jobs to provide for their families. This bill is a simple and cost-effective way to help child care providers and millions of parents plan better for the safety of their children. We thank you for your consideration and urge you to sign A.3498-a/S.5743.

Sincerely,

Betty Holcomb
Center for Children’s Initiatives

Marsha Dumka
Winning Beginning New York