Memorandum in Support
A.3498 (Peoples-Stokes)/S.2275 (Montgomery)

An act to amend the social services law, in relation to notice requirements to families and providers when funding cuts are made.

This bill amends §34-a of the Social Services Law to add a new subdivision 9 which incorporates a 90-day notice requirement when a planned reduction in eligibility or increase in co-payments for child care assistance are made.

Currently, State regulations require that only 10 days notice be given for a reduction or discontinuance of social services benefits. This 10-day notice provision generally applies when the recipient has a change in income. This is an exceedingly limited timeframe to provide notice to families within a social services district making it difficult for them to plan and adjust to dramatic changes in child care eligibility levels or co-payments. Child care is usually the most burdensome household cost for families, more than rent or mortgage payments. As a result, for low income working parents, loss of a subsidy or an increase in co-payments without adequate notification can have severe repercussions not only for families, but for daycare providers and businesses placed at risk of losing employees. Under these circumstances, families have had to make choices such as quitting their jobs or placing their children in child care that is unreliable or unregulated. Without time to make arrangements for their children, some of these parents have ended up relying on welfare benefits as a direct result of these cuts. Ten days is simply not sufficient time to make necessary alternative arrangements.

The bill requires that social services districts notify the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) 90 days before the effective date of a planned reduction in eligibility or increase in co-payments for child care assistance. OCFS, in turn, will be required to post notice of the proposed change on its website within 10 days and within 30 days notify child care providers, the state Child Care Resource and Referral organization (CCR&R), and local CCR&R organizations that serve the Social Services District. Providers and CCR&Rs are then asked to post the information so that parents are aware of the changes and can assess the impact on their household and act accordingly.

This bill provides a simple and cost-effective way to ensure that parents and providers are made aware of critical financial decisions made by the counties that will impact their household budgets and business income so that they have time to develop a plan to respond to this loss of financial assistance.

Winning Beginning NY strongly supports passage of this bill.
April 17, 2013