

American Academy of Pediatrics

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NYS AAP, District II, A coalition of Chapters 1, 2 & 3



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Memo of Support S.2755C/A.1160C The Child Poverty Reduction Act

The New York State American Academy of Pediatrics, representing more than 5,000 pediatricians across the state, strongly supports passage of S. 2755C/A.1160C, The Child Poverty Reduction Act, as a first step in addressing the unacceptably high rate of child poverty in New York.

For decades New York has allowed hundreds of thousands of children to endure the hardships of poverty – in times of recession, and in times of plenty. New York entered the pandemic with more than 700,000 children living in poverty, representing 18% of all New York children, with that percentage a full 10 points higher for Black children, and 7 for Latino children. **Compared to the rest of the nation, NY children were more likely to live in poverty than children in 32 other states.** And these rates do not include the hundreds of thousands of children and families pushed into poverty and near poverty since the pandemic struck. The child poverty rate in New York is significantly higher now than it was just one year ago.

The experience of poverty and trauma in childhood can have long-lasting impacts on development. The stress of poverty can alter the brain development of young children – causing permanent changes in the structure and functioning of the brain. As a result, many children who experience poverty face significant challenges – in the form of poor health, academic obstacles, lower earnings – for the rest of their lives. This has a detrimental impact on children, but also on the future viability of communities. Reactive interventions in the out-years through the provision of public benefits or interaction with the criminal justice system are far more costly than meeting the needs of disadvantaged children and families from the beginning. With the stakes so high, there should be no delay in tackling child poverty.

This legislation requires New York to publicly commit to cutting child poverty in half in ten years, with attention to racial equity. The legislation also requires the state to create a plan to reach this goal and requires regular assessment of progress toward the goal. It demands that our state leaders act with intention to shield our children from the far-reaching and long-lasting harms poverty causes.

S.2755C/A.1160C provides most of the tools needed to begin to reduce child poverty. It requires New York to make a public commitment to cutting child poverty in half in ten years; establishes the Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council to develop a plan to achieve this goal; requires regular reporting to hold state government to account; and directs the Advisory Council to evaluate state policies to cut child poverty.

We urge the legislature to pass **S.2755C/A.1160C** this legislative session. Let's take a first step and require our state to finally take real action to turn the tragic tide of child poverty.

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