

## FY2023-24 AFTERSCHOOL BUDGET PRIORITIES

*Coming out of the pandemic, young people need a wide range of academic and holistic support to help ensure their success in school and in life. New York has made important afterschool investments, but they still fall short of what is needed to ensure that the 1.6 million students who would participate in an afterschool program, if one were available to them, are able to do so. New York is strongly positioned to build on the national momentum to “engage every student” in high-quality afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs by sustaining and increasing afterschool access; expanding dedicated technical support; and investing in the afterschool workforce. We are asking New York State to:*

### **Invest \$219 million in a new Afterschool Learning and Enrichment Program (ALEP)**

**initiative.** Persistent structural and administrative challenges on afterschool programs revealed that the current afterschool infrastructure cannot meet demand and must be strengthened. Afterschool programs, including those run by community-based organizations (CBOs), continue to provide imperative support to students amid staffing shortages, grave undercompensation, low reimbursement rates, and contract delays. Yet, these programs saw no increased funding to support their work and were largely left out of direct pandemic response funding. Furthermore, coordinated changes to the Advantage After School Program (AASP) and Empire State After-School Program (ESAP) reinforce the need to reassess program requirements, timeline, and impact to establish an effective, consolidated, and sustainable afterschool system. The ALEP initiative will set the course for a new, improved, high-quality afterschool program that merges the best of AASP and ESAP, and strengthens the afterschool infrastructure in the following ways:

- Ensures equitable access to high-quality programs by adopting the base, true cost, per student rate of \$4,300 and/or an established level funding of \$219 million at the onset of the program
- Ensures continued assessment and modification of per student rates in future rounds consistent with minimum wage increases and cost-of-living adjustments
- Guarantees afterschool access to at least 50,000 students currently served by ESAP and AASP
- Prioritizes competitive workforce compensation and professional development
- Maximizes outcomes for students, families, and providers impacted by the afterschool programs
- Prioritizes eligibility for **BOTH** school districts and CBOs as lead applicants, and their collaboration
- Prioritizes technical assistance and evaluation to sustain quality supports
- Actively engages the statewide afterschool network, New York State Network for Youth Success, in the development, implementation, and provision of quality supports and capacity building
- Streamlines regulations, compliances, and RFP and contracting processes

### **Dedicate \$500,000 to the NYS Network for Youth Success, to provide technical assistance and quality supports for afterschool programs statewide.**

The Network is the statewide afterschool network and the only New York organization that coordinates statewide expertise, resources, and technical assistance specifically focused on school-age child care. With no base funding however, the Network is not adequately positioned to provide this wide scope of quality support. A \$500,000 investment is only ~1.2% of the required minimum CCDF quality set-aside (~\$41 million), none of which is currently dedicated to school-age child care. In addition to the supports provided, these funds would allow the Network to:

- Develop blueprints for data collection on school-age child care, which is currently lacking
- Support efforts to expand QUALITYstarsNY to school-age child care programs statewide (The Network currently serves as a lead collaborator in a pilot of QUALITYstarsNY to six school-age child care programs in fall 2022)

- Enhance capacity to coordinate further COVID-19 pandemic recovery support, including technical assistance around school-community partnerships and sustainability planning for programs
- Support localized capacity building and professional development efforts at the regional level

**Invest an additional \$3 million to expand the Educational Incentive Program (EIP).** The Educational Incentive Program (EIP) provides scholarships for credentialing activities, college credit-bearing coursework, and non-credit bearing training to help child care workers, including afterschool staff, develop professionally. Currently, the State provides up to \$17.4 million for “services and expenses of child care scholarships, education and ongoing professional development.” This allocation has not increased to accommodate the current demand and need to professionalize the child care workforce: EIP funds have been depleted by September of the calendar year in the last few years— a testament of the need to professionalize and build capacity for the afterschool field— leading to a waitlist of applications that would have been eligible to receive a scholarship if funds were available.

**Establish an Office of Expanded Learning and a dedicated afterschool fund or "lockbox".** Currently, state afterschool programs, i.e. Advantage After School, Empire State After-School, and Extended School Day/School Violence Prevention Programs have varied funding sources and requirements that increase the administrative and structural burdens for afterschool grantees. This is especially true for afterschool providers with multiple afterschool grants. A fully-funded, single agency and/or division dedicated to afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs would be critical to leading and aligning these processes, systems, and benchmarks needed to successfully implement a more robust afterschool program in the state. The creation of a single afterschool fund would help leverage allocations from multiple funding sources, while greatly improving the operational and functional capacity needed to administer the afterschool program.

**Establish an afterschool taskforce to facilitate efforts toward a strong, aligned, and coordinated afterschool system.** The taskforce shall examine the following:

- Access to and availability of afterschool programs in New York, including identification and assessment of barriers faced by families and providers
- Whether regulatory or statutory changes are needed to promote access to afterschool programming
- How the “traditional” child care and afterschool systems align to reinforce seamless continuum of care, including in administration of funds to support afterschool; and benchmarks and standards
- How school-community partnerships, including the role of community-based partners and strategic coordination between schools and community partners, help increase access to afterschool

**Develop a common policy and implementation framework between schools and afterschool programs to promote effective coordination and limit duplicative administrative burdens.** To ensure this, the state must reassess and align school-age child care regulations with school regulations to promote the following outcomes:

- Reciprocity and alignment of resources for schools and community partners. This can look like increased access to school buildings and leveraging professional development opportunities and certification for school and afterschool staff
- Flexibility to maximize use of school space
- Mutual accountability and collaboration between school and community partners
- Increased ability to blend funding to maximize staff capacity during school and after school