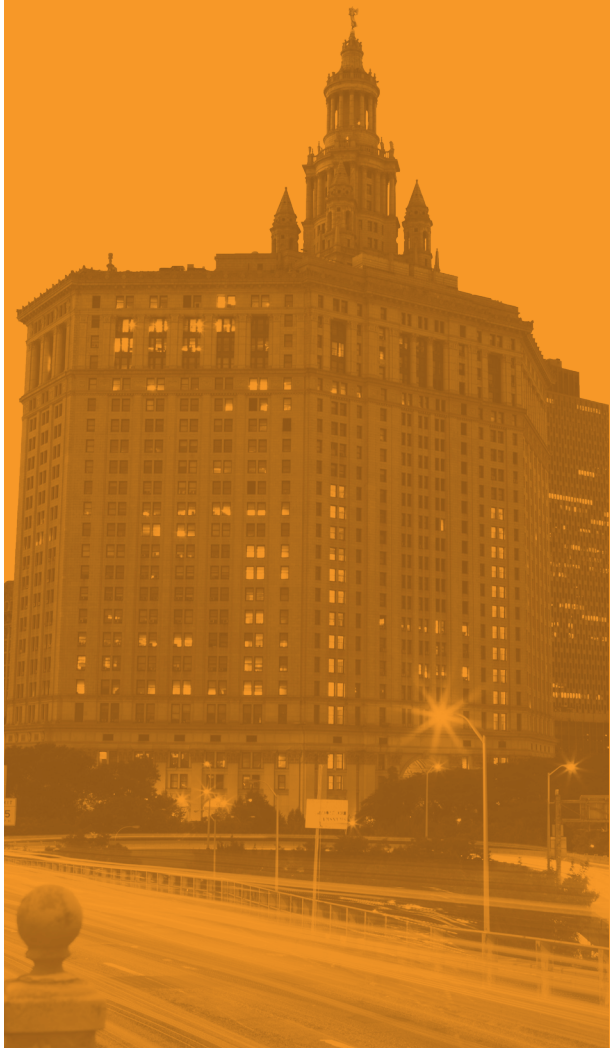
1 CENTRE STREET 15TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

WWW.PUBADVOCATE.NYC.GOV
(212) 669 - 7200

THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE
FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Letitia James



POLICY BRIEF: CHILD CARE IN NEW YORK CITY

Part I: Relieving the "Third Shift"

The Case for Expanding Child Care at CUNY Community Colleges

New York City Public Advocate
Letitia James

June 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3

INTRODUCTION 4

STUDENT PARENT PROFILE 6

CAMPUS CHILD CARE AT CUNY COMMUNITY COLLEGES 8

CHILD CARE AND COLLEGE ENROLLMENT 10

RECOMMENDATIONS 12

CONCLUSION 14

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 15

ENDNOTES 16

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the need for higher education becomes more critical for many New Yorkers, student parents juggle three "shifts" to make their ends meet. Between the paid work and school work, students who are enrolled in post-secondary degree programs and have dependent children rely heavily on the assistance of campus child care to alleviate their "third shift" of child care work. When the cost of child care becomes too high and its accessibility scarce, student parents become at risk of abandoning their college education. Even as student parents manage to graduate, the lack of child care services could delay their graduation and increase their debt. Almost half of CUNY community college students have household incomes less than $20,000 per year.

These student parents are also more likely to take longer time to graduate or drop out of college than nonparent students, which further exacerbates educational inequity and adversely affects New York City's economy.

Expanding higher education opportunities is critical for New York City to achieve a sustainable middle class. The City holds a responsibility to provide adequate child care systems to student parents at CUNY. **The City must increase its contribution to the CUNY budget for child care to ensure every child receives the care and opportunities needed. This report recommends that the additional funding be used to expand the number of child care centers, reach pay parity teachers, and improve overall evaluation and outreach efforts.**

INTRODUCTION

Higher education has never been a more important factor for success in the modern economy. A post-secondary degree is critical if low and moderate income New Yorkers are to compete for skill based, higher-paying jobs, which have doubled in the last 40 years.[1] The benefits of education are not just isolated to the individual; they redound to their children who are more likely to attain the same, if not more, education.[2]

Parenthood has not stopped young parents from attaining higher education, often citing their children as the motivation for enrolling in college. Student parents, who are enrolled in post-secondary degree programs and have dependent children, struggle to keep balance among three "shifts" of paid work, school work, and child care work. In New York City, student parents tend to concentrate in the two-year community college system at the City University of New York (CUNY). They rely heavily upon campus child care for success, and these services are essential if student parents are to stay in school and maximize their time.

When the cost of child care becomes high and its accessibility scarce, many student parents are forced to end or postpone their college education. According to the U.S. Department of Education data, student parents are more likely than non-parents to drop out, further exacerbating educational inequities.[3] High dropout rates have direct and indirect economic and social effects on the City. The Center for an Urban Future estimates as much as $2.4 billion of lost income and economic activity in the City over 10 years caused by student dropouts.[4] The City also takes a direct loss from students that have dropped out in tuition costs and a stagnating workforce. Indirect effects include greater poverty, a higher tax burden, and other public externalities. In addition to lower incomes, people without a post-secondary degree suffer twice the rate of unemployment than those with the degree.[5]

Community colleges nationwide have only one childcare slot for every 10 students who need services.

Even as student parents manage to graduate, the lack of child care services often delays their graduation and increase the amount of debt they accrue. Nationally, attending a two-year community college brings an average price tag of $16,325 per year.[6] Community college students, especially those with dependent children, generally have lower incomes than students attending four year colleges, and 83 percent of community college students nation-wide have documented a need for financial aid.[7] At CUNY, 57 percent of community college students were recipients of Pell Grants.[8]

Although most CUNY community colleges provide some campus child care, the City's contribution to the CUNY budget for childcare has remained flat at $500,000 since the 1980s.

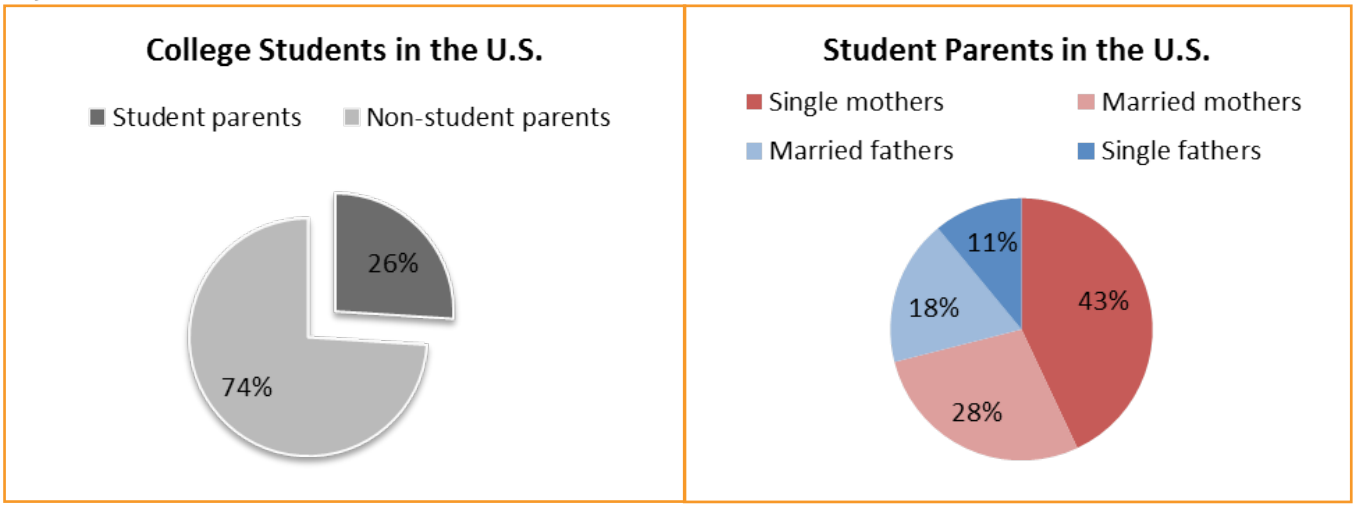
The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) estimates that community colleges nationwide have only one childcare slot for every 10 students who need services.[9] Although most CUNY community colleges provide some campus child care, the City's contribution to the CUNY budget for childcare has remained flat at $500,000 since the 1980s.[10] The current system is struggling to meet demand, leaving student parents underserved. Expanding campus child care at CUNY is about investing in human capital by improving the necessary social infrastructure for economic growth.

As such, the City must increase its commitment to student parents as part of its mission to create a more equal society for all New Yorkers.

STUDENT PARENT PROFILE

Nationally, 4.8 million undergraduate students are raising children as of 2012. Women make up 71 percent of all student parents. About two million students, or 43 percent of the total student parent population, are single mothers (Figure I).[11]

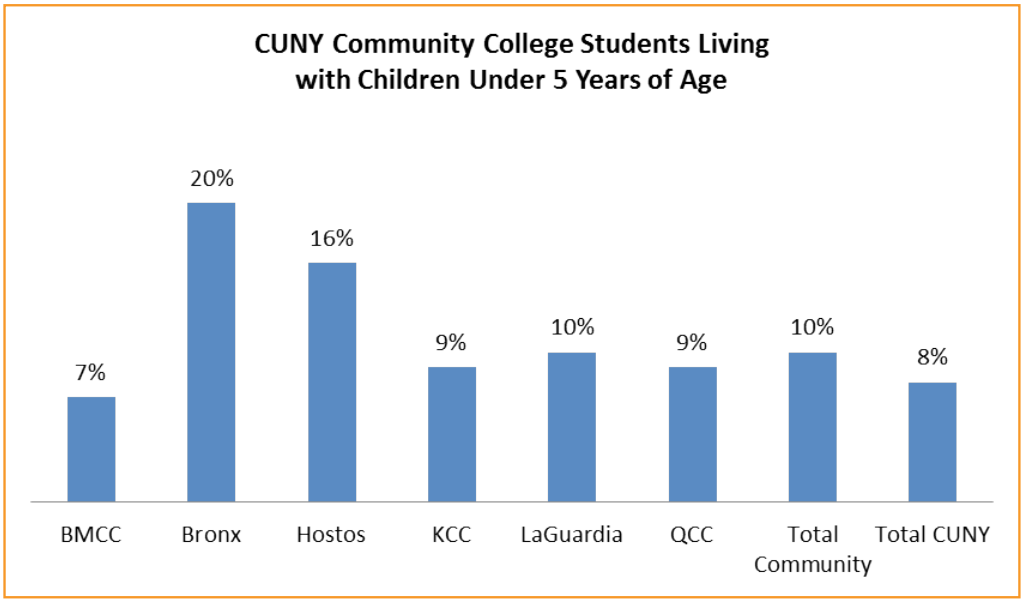
Figure I



Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research

Currently, there are 97,751 students enrolled in two-year community colleges at CUNY. According to CUNY's 2012 Student Experience Survey, 20 percent of community college students at CUNY support children, making up about 19,550 students. Half of those students' dependents are children under 5 years old. Bronx Community College has the highest percentage of students supporting children under 5, with 20 percent (Figure II).[12] The majority of CUNY's student parents today are in their late 20s and early 30s. The changing demographics, as well as unemployment and returning veterans have been contributing factors of the increased number of student parent populations attending CUNY schools.[13]

Figure II

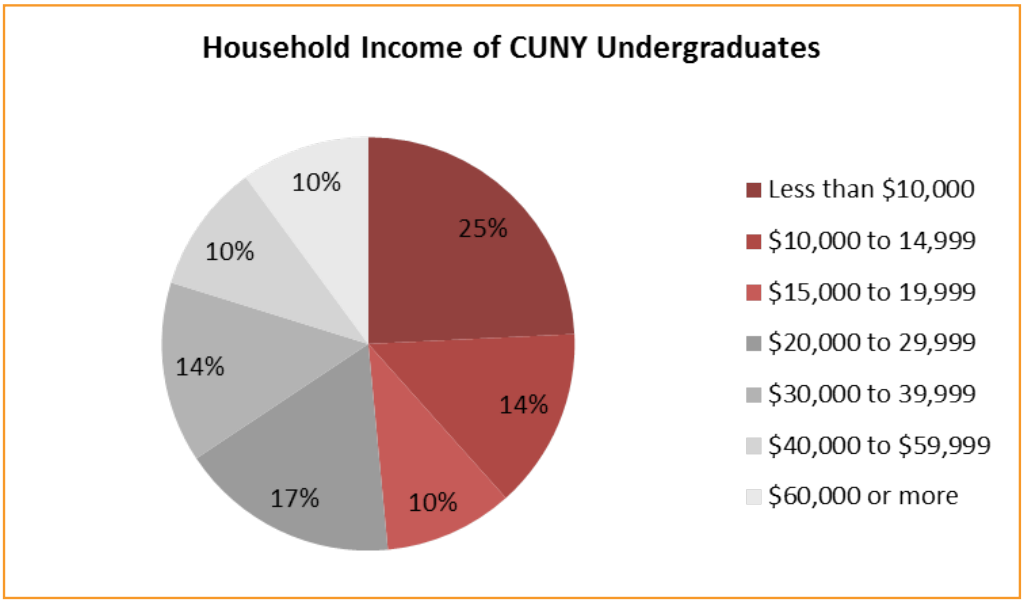


Source: CUNY 2012 Student Experience Survey

*Guttman opened in August, 2012 and did not participate in the 2012 Student Experience Survey.

Student survey conducted in 2014 further illustrates the particular need for affordable campus childcare at CUNY. 48 percent of students at CUNY community colleges have household incomes less than $20,000 per year (Figure III), and 23 percent of them work 20 hours or more per week.[14]

Figure III



Source: CUNY 2014 Student Experience Survey

CAMPUS CHILD CARE AT CUNY COMMUNITY COLLEGES

CUNY provides child care services at community colleges as well as four-year and graduate colleges, serving 1,495 children. The CUNY system includes seven community colleges, five of which have on-site child care, totaling 649 seats. Queensborough Community College and Guttman Community College currently do not offer child care on campus.* While the other five community colleges offer child care for pre-school aged children, only Kingsborough and LaGuardia offer child care for infants and toddlers (Figure IV).[15]

Figure IV

	Type of Centers		
Community College*	Infant/Toddlers (1-3 years)	Pre-school (2-5 years)	School Age (6-12 years)
BMCC		X	X
Bronx		X	X
Hostos		X	
Kingsborough	X	X	X
LaGuardia (has more than 1 location/license for age group)	X	X	X
		X	
Total Seats	40	471	138

As of November 11, 2014

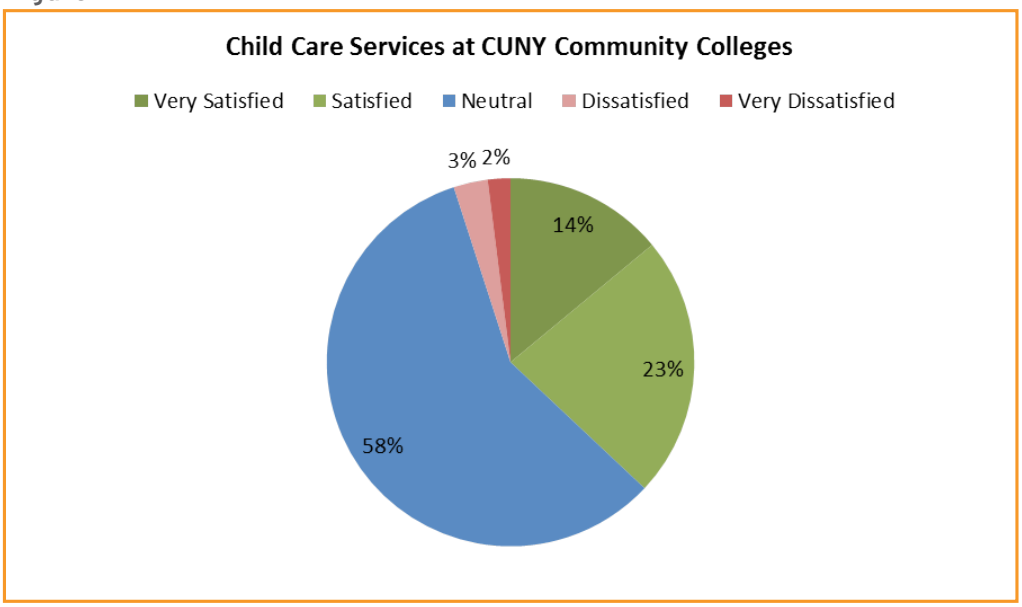
Child care centers follow the academic calendar, and registration at these centers are scheduled before each semester begins. Many child care centers keep a mailing list of student parents who have inquired about registering for child care for the following semester. Centers may keep a short waitlist, for a limited time, of student parents who could not register at the beginning of the semester.

Centers are supported through a combination of federal, state and city funding. Over the last four years, the State's Child Care and Development Block Grant allocation to CUNY was reduced from $1.4 million to $141,000.[16] Currently, the state contributes $2.7 million and the City $500,000 to CUNY childcare centers.[17] On top of these cuts, the federal assistance for low-income students has been cut by one-third between 2010 and 2012, further straining student parents.

In efforts to avoid raising fees to the point students cannot afford, CUNY has been making up the shortfall. The student parents at CUNY pay a range of $5 to $25 for a full day, with centers operating on average for 13 hours per day.[18] Private daycare can cost thousands of dollars each month; hence, the subsidized fees of the campus child care centers are vital for most student parents.

The level of satisfaction with child care services at each of the community colleges has generally been positive. While five percent of the respondents indicated dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, 37 percent of the respondents indicated satisfied or very satisfied with child care services. There is room for improvement in terms of student parents' satisfactory level as the majority of the respondents felt neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the services (Figure V).[19]

Figure V



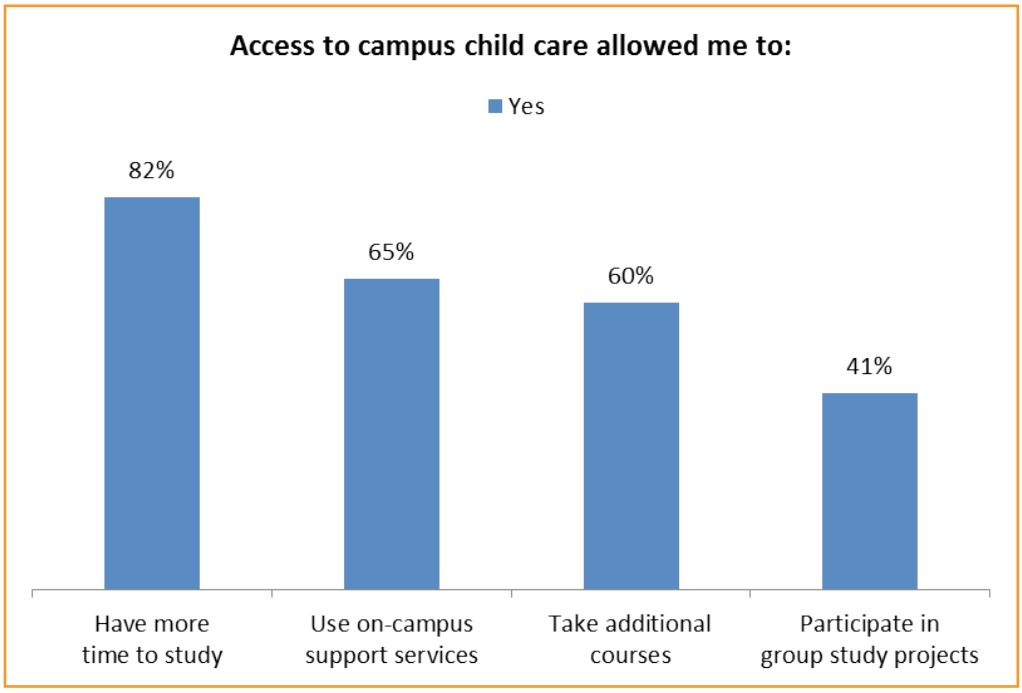
Source: CUNY 2014 Student Experience Survey

CHILD CARE AND COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

Without access to affordable child care, many parents would not be able to attend college. There is extensive research on the relationship between child care accessibility and academic enrollment of student parents. A 1995 national study found that over 80 percent of student-parent respondents ranked the availability of child care as very important in the decision to attend community college and 46 percent reported that campus child care was the first priority factor when enrolling in college. Roughly 60 percent said they could not have continued college without child care services.[20]

For many student parents in New York City, it is essential that child care be offered on-campus, and at a reduced cost. The Borough of Manhattan Community College's 2009 survey found that 70 percent of its student parents indicated child care services as necessary for them to remain enrolled.[21] The most recent survey conducted in 2014 of all campus child care centers at CUNY had similar findings. Of the 317 respondents, 91 percent of student parents said it would be "difficult" or "very difficult" to attend school without campus child care. 65 percent of the respondents said that comparable services in their neighborhood would not fit their schedule. 90 percent of the respondents said that they would not be able to afford off campus child care and their tuition. The respondents stated that because of campus child care, they were able to enroll in more classes, participate in study groups and take advantage of school resources (Figure VI).[22]

Figure VI



Even as student parents manage to graduate, the lack of child care services often delays their graduation and increases the amount of debt they accrue. According to IWPR, only 33 percent of student parents nation-wide attain a degree or certificate within six years of enrollment.[23] CUNY students have lower debt compared to the national average; however, student parents have much higher levels of debt after graduation than their non-student parent counterparts. Community college students, especially those with dependent children, generally have lower incomes than students attending four-year colleges, and 83 percent of community college students nation-wide have documented a need for financial aid.[24] As such, the national average of student mothers' undergraduate debt one year after graduation is approximately $3,800 more than that of female students with no children, and nearly $5,000 more than that of male students with no children.[25]

91% of CUNY student parents said it would be "difficult" or "very difficult" to attend school without campus child care.

As illustrated above, students with dependent children – especially single mothers – are at higher risk of dropping out, accumulating higher debt, and more dependent on campus childcare for success in school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since 1980, New York City's contribution to the CUNY budget for child care has been flat at $500,000. The City must allocate $1.53 million for CUNY child care program so that all child care centers at CUNY community colleges are fully funded to meet their demand. To ensure every child receives the care and opportunities needed, the Office of the Public Advocate recommends the following:

1. **Increasing the number of child care slots**
   The increased funding would help expand quality child care to CUNY for an additional 106 slots in both senior and community colleges. Specifically, $350,000 should go towards community college child care centers to secure an additional 61 slots.

   The funding could help restore some slots that have been lost. BMCC lost funding when the Early Learn program was first initiated and lost child care slots as a result. The center at Kingsborough Community College also recently lost a federal grant and that center expects to lose slots. In addition, infant and toddler programs are in high demand. As Bronx Community College's new infant and toddler program is under development, it is critical to safeguard its funding to increase the available slots.

2. **Reaching pay and benefits parity**
   CUNY child care centers are staffed exclusively by teachers certified in early childhood education, although some are only part-time (non-union). However, the current compensation levels are low, especially among teachers who take care of infants and toddlers. Currently, the average salary for teachers in CUNY child care centers is $37,737. The salaries of their counterparts in the Department of Education (DOE) start at approximately $50,000.

   Competitive compensation structures for early childhood professionals ensure high quality workforce and positive outcomes for children. It also allows programs to run cost efficiently and reduce challenges in recruiting and retaining quality staff. Early childhood educators must receive salaries and benefits that are commensurate with the education level, experience, and responsibilities of the position. Reaching pay and benefits parity for all staff at CUNY child care programs will ensure high quality and effective programming.

3. **Data collection, research and outreach efforts**
   CUNY conducts an annual Student Experience Survey that includes questions around the satisfactory level of child care services and whether the student lives with children at home. The survey should be expanded to include the number of students that directly and indirectly

support dependent children, number of student parents seeking campus child care, student parents' demographics and attendance information.

Upon data collection, it is crucial to conduct long-term studies around the role of campus child care and demonstrate the impact on retention rates and academic performances of student parents at CUNY. The systematic data around student parents may also help expand the outreach and advertising efforts of the child care centers so that potential applicants are aware of the on campus service options.

i CUNY does not track students who transfer out of the system and enter another degree program.

CONCLUSION

Investing in child care yields both short-term and generational benefits for families, as well as long-term cost savings for the City. The significant amount of public investment to students attending CUNY community colleges can be a waste if the students do not graduate or take a longer time to complete. The total public cost for each community college student who does not receive a degree is roughly $17,783.[i] The income lost to a single cohort of CUNY community college students entering in one year is approximately $86 million, as well as $19 million in lost tax revenue. This would be about $153 million in lost overall economic activity for New York City.[26] However, even the slight increase in the graduation rates for these student populations has a significant impact in the City's economy. Increasing the graduation rate by as little as 10 percentage points is estimated to benefit the City and state economy by $689 million over 10 years.[27]

Throughout this report, the direct linkage between campus child care and student parents' academic outcomes has been highlighted. The increased investment in campus child care centers will have a direct and immediate impact on CUNY's graduation rate, as well as the future economy of New York City. Increased access to campus child care will reduce financial burdens and ensure higher education opportunities for student parents – a key factor towards achieving a sustainable middle class. By expanding access to affordable child care, the City can meet both a social and economic imperative to increase opportunities for all and help families meet their full potential.

[i] CUNY does not track students who transfer out of the system and enter another degree program.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

New York City Public Advocate Letitia James acknowledges the contributions of all staff members that contributed greatly to this policy report. Writing and coordination was led by Amber Greene, Director of Policy and Michelle Kim, Policy Associate; research, interviews and writing were conducted by Alexis Grenell.

ENDNOTES

1 Anthony P. Carnevale, Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl. 2010. "Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018." Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

2 Bethany Nelson, Meghan Froehner, and Barbara Gault. 2013. "College Students with Children are Common and Face Many Challenges in Completing Higher Education." Institute for Women's Policy Research.

3 Institute for Women's Policy Research's analysis of U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003-04 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, Second Follow-up (BPS:04/09); U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995-96 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, Second Follow-up (BPS:96/01); U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1989-90 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, Second Follow-up.

4 Tom Hiliard. 2011. "Mobility Makers." Center for an Urban Future.

5 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. April 2, 2015. "Earnings and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment." <http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_001.htm>. Accessed on May 21, 2015.

6 College Board. 2014. "Trends in College Pricing 2014." Trends in Higher Education Series.

7 The Institute for College Access and Success. 2009. "Quick Facts about Financial Aid and Community Colleges, 2007-2008."

8 The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. 2013. "A Profile of Undergraduates at CUNY Cenior and Community Colleges: Fall 2013." The City University of New York.

9 Barbara Gault, Lindsey Reichlin, Elizabeth Reynolds, and Meghan Froehner. 2014. "Campus Child Care Declining Even As Growing Numbers of Parents Attend College." Institute for Women's Policy Research.

10 Betty Pearsall, University Director of Child Care Services and Women's Centers, CUNY Student Affairs. Personal Interview. April 2015.

11 Barbara Gault, Lindsey Reichlin, Elizabeth Reynolds, and Meghan Froehner. 2014. "4.8 Million College Students are Raising Children." Institute for Women's Policy Research.

12 The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. 2012. "2012 Student Experience Survey." The City University of New York.

13 Salute to Scholars. April 26, 2012. "Commuting to Class – With the Kids." The City University of New York. <http://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2012/04/26/commuting-to-class-%E2%80%94-with-the-kids/>. Accessed on May 21, 2015.

14 The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. 2014. "2014 Student Experience Survey." The City University of New York.

15 Betty Pearsall. Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Salute to Scholars. Ibid.

19 "2014 Student Experience Survey." Ibid.

20 Keyes, Carol R. and Pamela Boulten. 1995. "Campus Children's Centers: Support for Children and Families." Children Today 23 (4): 18-21.

21 The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. 2009. "Borough of Manhattan Community College Factbook 2008-2009." The City University of New York.

22 Child Care Council. 2014. "CUNY Campus Child Care Student Parent Survey Tally." The City University of New York.

23 Barbara Gault, Lindsey Reichlin, Elizabeth Reynolds, and Meghan Froehner, Ibid.

[24] The Institute for College Access and Success. 2009. "Quick Facts about Financial Aid and Community Colleges, 2007-2008."

[25] Barbara Gault, Lindsey Reichlin, Elizabeth Reynolds, and Meghan Froehner, Ibid.

[26] Tom Hiliard. Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

1 CENTRE STREET
15TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

WWW.PUBADVOCATE.NYC.GOV
(212) 669 - 7200

THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE
FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Letitia James

FACEBOOK.COM/PALETITIAJAMES

@TISHJAMES