



Halfway to 2031: Advocates Press Albany to Deliver on Child Poverty Pledge

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ALBANY, N.Y. (March 4, 2026) – Advocates from across New York State gathered at the State Capitol today for an anti-poverty rally, with a focus on child poverty reduction.

New York children are more likely to live in poverty than in [37 other states](#), with 18% (nearly one in five) experiencing poverty in 2024.

At a time when federal actions are pulling support away from low-income families, New York's policies are especially important. State investments in reducing poverty and promoting family economic security will help to insulate New York's children from the harms of federal cuts and program rollbacks.

Spearheaded by the [New York Can End Child Poverty](#) coalition, the [Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative](#), [Hunger Solutions NY](#), [The Legal Aid Society](#), [Schuyler Center](#), and [HousingWorks](#), the group included parents, legislators, educators, health care providers, labor unions, faith leaders, and more. The coalition has been leading the way in ensuring that the state follows through on their goal of reducing child poverty by 50% by 2031.

The rally took place as the NYS Senate and Assembly are finalizing their budget proposals. The campaign is urging Governor Hochul and state leaders to build on last year's progress by including proposals embraced by the Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council in the final state budget.

“Childhood poverty is not a marginal issue – it requires and deserves our urgent attention, particularly now as the federal government is dismantling the services and programs that serve as a lifeline for many NY families. RMAPI has helped us to identify measurable steps we can take to reduce the effects and circumstances of poverty, and now it's time for New York to put these strategies into action by supporting social and economic policies that will uplift families into a brighter, more secure future. I am proud to partner with RMAPI in support of their 2026 Policy Agenda which outlines a robust but achievable framework so that all families and individuals can attain the resources they need to thrive.” **said Assemblymember Harry B. Bronson**

“Fighting poverty requires bold, coordinated action, and I am proud to stand with advocates advancing solutions that lift families up,” **said Senator Leah Webb**. “We must meet people

where they are and make meaningful investments that reduce costs, increase opportunity, and create real economic security for working families. These policies are about dignity, stability, and opportunity. Every New Yorker deserves the chance to thrive, and I remain committed to building an economy that works for working families.”

"As the Trump administration does everything it can to cut Medicaid, slash food assistance and dismantle safety net programs, New York State must step up and finally increase its cash assistance allowances," said **Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal (D/WF - Manhattan)**, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Housing. "For many years, I have sponsored legislation to raise our outdated cash assistance benefits, which thousands of vulnerable New Yorkers rely on to pay their utility bills, feed their families and keep a roof over their heads each month. Yet, with costs continuing to rise and federal benefits being cut, people can no longer get by on benefits that have not risen in decades. The cost of raising these allowances is small compared to the cost of leaving countless New Yorkers in poverty. I look forward to working with this coalition to secure a much-needed increase to these programs in our state budget."

Senator Samra Brouk (SD-55): "To help our working families in Rochester, we must support affordable housing; work to close the gap between need and access for our community members; and advance policies that address systemic inequities. I am proud to share Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative (RMAPI)'s mission to combat poverty with real, sustained action."

"Reducing childhood poverty must remain a top priority for New York State," said **Assemblywoman Maritza Davila**, Chair of the New York State Assembly Committee on Social Services. "When children lack access to stable housing, nutritious food, and economic security, the long-term consequences affect their health, education, and future opportunities. If we fail to act with urgency, we risk deepening inequality and harming generations of New Yorkers — which is why we must continue making meaningful investments to lift children out of poverty."

"The RMAPI Policy Agenda aims to create systemic changes that will generate generational impacts for our families living in poverty. From raising wages to investing in families, this agenda prioritizes dismantling systems that keep people in poverty and providing necessary supports to uplift our families," said **Assemblywoman Jennifer Lunsford**. "I'm proud to join with my elected colleagues and leaders from throughout the community to advance this people-centered agenda, and I will continue to lend my voice to these priorities in Albany to secure the needed funding to meet these critical goals."

"While the federal government doubles down on cutting safety net programs, the cost of living is skyrocketing. We continue to fight for increases to the basic needs grant and energy allowances that help the least resourced New Yorkers better meet their needs", said **Senator Roxanne J. Persaud, Chair of the Senate Social Services Committee**. "Recommended in 2024 by the Governor's Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council (CPRAC), this grant increase would help New York's neediest individuals and families fighting to survive on just dollars per day. The time is now."

“We have both a statutory and a moral responsibility to address child poverty in New York, and I am deeply grateful to be able to work alongside such relentless and expert partners in this fight,” **said Assemblymember Andrew Hevesi.** “This year, we’re pushing a further expanded Empire State Child Tax Credit — building on recent historic gains — because this is one of our most powerful tools to cut child poverty, and we’re poised to make significant progress toward universal child care, which must be done in tandem with investing in the workforce that makes the system possible. On many of these policies, we’re being guided directly by the Governor’s Child Poverty Reduction Council, and with the relentless partnership of coalitions like the Empire State Campaign for Child Care, I believe we are positioned to make real progress this session.”

“Child poverty and hunger are policy choices, and New York has both the tools and the responsibility to do better. At a moment when federal support for families is being rolled back, our state must step up to protect children from going hungry and falling deeper into poverty. That means following through on the promise we made with the Child Poverty Reduction Act and fully investing in solutions that meet families where they are. From universal school meals that ensure every child can learn without hunger, to protecting SNAP and EBT benefits from theft, to expanding Summer EBT and summer meals so kids are fed when school is out, these are proven investments that were advanced through our state budget and must be strengthened, not sidelined. Halfway to 2031, New York cannot afford to slow down—we must lead with urgency and deliver for our children,” **said Assembly Member Jessica González-Rojas.**

“Reducing child poverty is not only a moral responsibility—it is an investment in New York’s future,” **said Assemblyman Josh Jensen.** “When children have access to stable housing, nutritious meals, and the support they need to thrive, they are far more likely to succeed in school, contribute meaningfully to their communities and break the cycle of poverty. The recommendations put forward by the CPRAC offer an important starting point in addressing this critical issue. As we work toward the shared goal of reducing child poverty, it is essential that these proposals be thoroughly discussed and carefully debated in the Legislature to ensure the voices and needs of all New Yorkers are reflected in the solutions we ultimately adopt.”

“Poverty rates, especially child-poverty rates, are far too high across New York State,” **said Senator Jeremy Cooney.** “That’s why the work of organizations like RMAPI is so vital, and why it’s crucial that we continue to support their life-changing work. By partnering to fight for affordable childcare, access to high-quality healthcare, economic opportunities, housing, and more, we can put money in the hands of those who need it most and uplift our fellow community members out of poverty.”

“New York made a promise to its children, and today we are here to make sure that promise is kept,” said **Kate Breslin, President and CEO, Schuyler Center.** “The path forward is clear: expand the Empire State Child Credit, strengthen cash assistance, and ensure every family has food, housing, and child care. We know what works — and New York has both the tools and the will to build a future where every child can thrive.”

“We have proven over the past decade that when public policy aligns with community voice, poverty declines,” said **Aqua Y. Porter, Executive Director of the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative (RMAPI)**. “Rochester’s poverty rate has dropped by more than 20 percent — progress that reflects intentional choices and sustained investment. Now, it is critical that New York State legislators continue listening closely to the lived experiences of their constituents and advance policies that protect that progress.

Today is about ensuring that community voices — especially those historically excluded from decision-making — are heard, respected, and reflected in state policy. It is about protecting the progress we’ve made, blocking policies that would widen inequities, and maintaining the momentum toward upward mobility. When lawmakers align the state budget with what families actually need — stable housing, affordable child care, access to food, fair wages, and equitable systems — they strengthen not only Rochester, but communities across New York.”

“Amid rising food insecurity rates and unprecedented federal cuts to anti-hunger programs, New York State must lead the way in alleviating poverty and ensuring all New Yorkers have access to the food they need,” said **Andrés Vives, Chief Executive Officer, Hunger Solutions New York**. “State investments can protect and expand New Yorkers’ access to food assistance programs, including SNAP and WIC — which have been shown to both improve food security and reduce poverty. Ensuring families across our state can afford food and their basic needs is an investment in the health, wellbeing, and vitality of every New Yorker.”

“While the federal government slashes SNAP and Medicaid, New York State cannot sit on its hands. Our leaders have a responsibility to act.” Said **Anthony Feliciano, VP of Advocacy at Housing Works**. “For most families, cash assistance hasn’t increased since 2011 — that is indefensible. As families face devastating cuts from the Trump administration, the state must immediately strengthen proven supports for low-income New Yorkers. We either stand up for our communities now, or we abandon them.”

Judith Goldiner, Attorney-in-Charge of the Civil Law Reform Unit with The Legal Aid Society, said, “The Governor must honor her commitment to reduce poverty through action. As Washington continues to gut critical assistance for low-income households and families face rising costs for rent, food, and child care, Albany must step up with common-sense reforms to Cash Assistance, ensure universal access to food assistance in New York State, and make crucial investments in the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) established last year. If lawmakers are serious about making New York the best place to raise a family, we must strengthen the safety net now and bring relief to the lowest-income families.”

“Every day, 211 specialists across New York hear directly from families who are doing everything right and still cannot afford rent, food, childcare, or utilities. The calls we receive are a real-time snapshot of economic hardship in our communities. As we reach the halfway point toward New York’s goal of cutting child poverty in half by 2031, we cannot afford to slow down. As shown in our latest ALICE Report, 48% of the households of New York are struggling to make basic ends meet.” said **President and CEO of United Way New York, Therese Daly**. “State investments in refundable tax credits, rental assistance, food access, and public benefit modernization are not abstract policy choices — they are lifelines for the families who contact

211 seeking help. Strengthening these supports will not only reduce poverty, but also stabilize households, improve child well-being, and create stronger local economies.

United Way of New York State and 211 New York stand ready to partner with state leaders to ensure that every family has access to the resources they need to thrive. Now is the time to turn commitment into action. Let's make childhood poverty history!"

"New York made a statutory commitment to cut child poverty in half by 2032 when it passed the Child Poverty Reduction Act," **said Larry Marx, CEO of The Children's Agenda**. "But we are not on track to meet that goal, and voters know it and want action. Our statewide poll of likely 2026 voters in December showed that majorities of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans alike want to see state government spend more than they are now to reduce child poverty, make sure eligible families get food assistance, and make child care more affordable. New York policymakers have a nonnegotiable duty to act in this year's budget to get on track to cut child poverty, regardless of federal cuts."

Background: New York's Commitment to New York's Children

In 2021, the New York State Legislature passed, and the Governor signed, the [Child Poverty Reduction Act](#), committing the State to reduce child poverty by 50% over a decade, with attention to racial equity. The law had nearly unanimous bipartisan support in the Senate and Assembly.

When Governor Hochul signed the Act into law, New York became a leader in creating a measurable goal toward ending child poverty. New York's leaders made it clear that our state will no longer tolerate having two in five children experiencing severe economic hardship.

2026 marks the half-way point of the Act's timeline for cutting child poverty rates in half.

Among other provisions, the Act established the [Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council](#) (CPRAC) chaired by the Executive Chamber and the Commissioner of the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. Appointed Council members include NYS agency leaders, advocates, impacted community members, heads of county social services departments, and others working to end and mitigate child poverty in New York State.

At the end of 2024, CPRAC released its recommendations for reducing New York's child poverty rate by 50 percent. CPRAC's recommendations to Governor Hochul and the New York State Legislature are built on proven strategies to combat child poverty, including:

- **Expanding refundable child tax credits** to provide direct and sustained economic support for families.
- **Establishing a statewide rental assistance program** to ensure stable and affordable housing.
- **Increasing public assistance benefits** to meet families' basic needs and indexing them to inflation.

- **Reintroducing state food assistance programs** to fill gaps in federal SNAP coverage for children.