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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Women and Families Committee
Thursday, April 23, 2026 - 6:30 PM
Conducted Remotely on Zoom

Minutes

Present: Elizabeth Ashby, Danielle Avissar, Gayle Baron, Susan Evans*, Valerie Iovino*, Valerie Mason, Peggy Price, Judy Schneider, Robin Seligson.

**Public Member*

*Approximate Number of Public Attendees:*30

Item 1: New Affordable Child Care Options in New York City: What to Know Now

Given the high cost of childcare, the Women & Families Committee addressed NYC's steps to create affordable childcare throughout the City.

Speakers included Julie Menin, Speaker of the NYC Council and Council Member for the 5th Council District; Elliot Haspel, author and senior fellow at think tank, Capita; and Kellan Calder, community organizer at New Yorkers United for Child Care.

As described, this year has brought a raft of City initiatives aimed at creating free, universal, childcare in NYC within five years. Among the plans announced this year:

- A new 2-K program, starting this fall, that will provide free care initially for about 2,000 two-year-olds in high needs areas
- An additional 1,000 3-K seats this year, bringing total free seats for three-year-olds to more than 40,000;
- A free birth-to-age-two initiative
- A childcare action fund to help pay for these programs

Speakers lauded the City's initiatives while detailing what still needs to be done. To make affordable childcare more widely available, speakers and audience members pointed to: the need for more care facilities; reducing "red tape" that impedes services; higher salaries for care workers; more affordable insurance for care providers and dedicated funding.

Speaker Julie Menin touted the new childcare center at 403 East 65th Street as an example of the City's drive to create universal childcare. Set to open this fall, the 65th Street facility on Manhattan's Upper East Side will serve 72 four-year-olds and 63 three-year olds.

"One of the things we're focused on is building new childcare facilities," Speaker Menin said, since many facilities have closed in recent years. She cited worker turnover due to inadequate salaries. All the while, many parents have found the cost of care out-of-reach. "About 300,000 parents left the workforce last year because they could not find affordable, accessible childcare. And many of those parents were women," Speaker Menin noted.

In 2022, Ms. Menin, then (and still) Council Member representing the 5th Council District on Manhattan's Upper East Side, unveiled a package of legislation to promote universal childcare in NYC. This year, she said, the City Council has passed a "whole range of bills focused on making it easier to open and operate childcare facilities—to cut through the bureaucracy and red tape that has made it difficult to open" these facilities. Among specifics mentioned: Ms. Menin said she has been carrying a bill to create a new office of insurance accountability. The initiative aims to lower New York's soaring premiums across multiple types of insurance by forcing insurers to disclose some of their pricing.

Among other problems, staff turnover at care facilities remains acute. Care workers' pay trends comparatively low, and less than public school teachers typically earn. Speaker Menin suggested ways to boost care center staffing, such as using students or area residents, among them, grandmothers, who could come in to assist. However, obstacles such as "red tape" at the departments of health and education make this outreach difficult, Ms. Menin acknowledged.

Some attendees queried whether Manhattan's Upper East Side is receiving an equitable share of childcare allotments. According to press reports, access to this year's expanded 3-K program will depend on residents' ZIP code. But not all UES ZIP codes are included in this expansion, despite the UES' substantial population of toddlers. To promote fairness, the Council Speaker was asked to "take leadership" on pairing access to affordable childcare with areas most in need of the care. This way, Manhattan's Upper East Side could benefit proportionately.

In his presentation, **Elliot Haspel** cited some best practices for creating universal childcare.
Top on his list was avoiding a quick rollout of the program. While demand for affordable childcare is often high, rushing to meet it can create supply bottlenecks that can impair quality. Thus, the best practice is to phase in affordable childcare to create a manageable, enduring program.

Other best practices: taking families' needs into account when designing programs; maintaining a stable force of child care educators and adequately paying them; offering multiple forms of child care; creating appropriate infrastructure and technology, such as websites, to help families find child care; and, ensuring on-going funding (not subject to budget battles) in such forms as trust funds and allocations enshrined in a state's constitution.

In terms of pay for childcare workers, Mr. Haspel held that "the market will never be able to offer a family sustaining wage." But there are ways to enhance these workers' compensation. These include the use of salary scales and what's called "direct wave supplementation"—programs that provide an award or stipend every quarter or month.

With the wage scale concept, childcare workers would be paid similarly to the way public school teachers or municipal employees are compensated. Mr. Haspel cited practices in Washington, D.C. There, the city uses a wage equity fund to pay childcare educators on par with elementary school teachers with similar experiences and credentials. The results: the program has boosted childcare workers' pay an average $15,000 and "massively increased workers' retention," Mr. Haspel reported.

However, childcare funding is limited, and tensions have arisen over the use of funds. Should they raise wages for childcare workers, or should they lower parents' cost of services? Mr. Haspel recommended avoiding that no-win debate. But he did point out, "The more you stabilize the childcare workforce, the more the programs won't constantly have to spend money recruiting and retraining new staff."

Presenter **Kellan Calder** explained how her organization, New Yorkers United for Child Care got started. Given that NYC and NYS are becoming increasingly unaffordable, the cost of childcare is out of reach for a large number of families. New Yorkers spend $14B annually on childcare. In NYC it costs an average of $22,000 a year per family to cover childcare. Coupled with cuts to early childcare education by the previous administration which affected 3K, as well as having no universal voice of parents, the need for a group to advocate for Universal Public Child Care (UPC) was evident. The organization was launched in November 2023 with the goal of providing free childcare to all New York families state-wide. UPC would cover all children from birth to age 5,

be available for a full day from 8AM to 6PM, be located within 15 minutes of one's home and be easy to apply for.

As a group, New Yorkers United for Child Care's advocacy was successful. The organization rallied parents as well as lobbied in Albany. Governor Hochul on January 8, 2026, committed funding to expand 3K over a two-year period. The organization's next steps are to secure 2K for all children, as well as full day and full year 3K and pre-K. Ms. Calder said the organization is looking into NYC zip codes to ensure that no area in need will fail to have adequate coverage. She urged attendees to sign petitions, attend her group's local meetings which provide childcare and spread the word. She explained that the organization has 12,000 members and would welcome others to join in their outreach. Since the continuation of funding will be critical after 2028, all voices are needed to be heard.

Item 2: Old Business – No Old Business

Item 3: New Business – No New Business

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:35 PM

P. Gayle Baron and Margaret Price, Co-Chairs, Women and Families Committee