We are delighted to report that our fourth child care tentative agreement with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and New York State passed unanimously in a vote by CSEA/VOICE Local 100A members held in July.

More than 350 members turned out for an informational Zoom meeting before the voting period began to discuss highlights and questions about the agreement with the CSEA/VOICE negotiating team. Members also learned our new electronic voting process using Election Buddy technology.

The approved four-year union contract runs retroactively from October 2021 through September 2025. Highlights include:

- Continued funds for professional development that will include limited training opportunities for assistants, and child care quality grants.
- Continued funds for ACA health insurance premium rebates, supplemental vision and dental insurance, telemedicine benefit to child care providers and their household members.
- OCFS has agreed to comply with the direct deposit payment option.
- Fair Dispute Resolution and Provider Rights.
- Guiding Principles (Provider Rights) to ensure we get the respect we deserve.

We’ve taken action and accomplished many of the goals set by our members at region, statewide and chapter meetings. This year, we also fought for and won:

- Increasing subsidy rates paid to providers to the 80th percentile.
- Requiring 12-month eligibility determinations for parents.
- Limiting family copayments to 10%.
- Pay for 24 absences per year.
- $343 million available for a second round of stabilization grants, of which at least 75% of which must be used for workforce initiatives ($257,250,000).
- Expands child care subsidy eligibility for children in families with incomes up to 300% of the state income standard, provided they are at or below 85% of the federal poverty level ($83,250 for a family of four).
- Expands child care facilitated enrollment to Nassau and Suffolk counties, in addition to existing programs.

With a strong membership base, our union will continue to negotiate and deliver support and services to providers across New York.

“Coming together was our beginning,” said Wells. “Our continuous effort, dedication, and hard work opened the door for us to do great things, and to do small things in a great way. Looking back over the years, if I had to pick just one thing that I was most proud of, it would be taking the opportunity to build relationships with others knowing that by our efforts it would help improve the lives of others.”

“Pam Wells always says ‘power creates change.’ As a union leader, she worked tirelessly to build power that has led to positive changes for providers,” said CSEA President Mary E. Sullivan. “With her leadership, CSEA/VOICE members have made great strides in addressing issues that face providers. I thank Pam for her service and dedication to growing our union strong and wish her well.”

Announcing CSEA VOICE Local 100A officers and chapter representatives

Our union held internal elections this year. We have many new names and faces stepping up to lead our Chapters across New York State. If you are interested in serving in one of the unfillid Chapter representative positions, please contact your regional Early Learning and Care Representative or call the CSEA VOICE Child Care Resource Center at 877-483-2732.

CSEA/VOICE Local 100A member Kadain Richardson recently expanded her child care program in Rochester, thus serving eight children to 16 children with our number's help.

A new grant called ‘The Invest in New York – Child Care Desert Grant’ is part of an historic $7 billion child care investment that CSEA/VOICE and the Empire State Child Care Coalition successfully advocated for last state budget cycle.

The grant aims to help child care providers in underserved areas build their programs, cover startup costs and hire, recruit, train or retain staff.

There are specific guidelines for this grant, which is why our union is providing one-on-one assistance for each provider throughout the process.

This opportunity is open to new and existing child care programs (licensed/unlicensed) throughout New York State.

Bonnie Caldwell, CSEA/VOICE Local 100A President-Heidi Jo Brandt.

“Making the change to Group Family was very challenging for me,” said Richardson, “I had to move a bunch of furniture, and some stuff out to get more space and accommodate more children. I added a mom to my child care space and hired my mom as an assistant. I have no regrets. This is something I have always wanted to do. I recommend that people do it. I communicated with them [union representatives] through email about questions, what we needed to do, the deadlines. Step-by-step. Learned what to do and when to do it. It was easy to follow. I just had to follow up. I received my Group Family License on July 15.”

“Providers who are less comfortable on the computer and prefer to have their one-on-one assistance by phone can certainly do that. They just have to call our CSEA/VOICE Resource Center at 877-483-2732 to get the ball rolling,” said Brandt.

“I’ve been doing this for 14 years and we were struggling for a long time,” said Richardson. “We’ve been putting in a lot of work and long hours, and we weren’t really seen, we weren’t really getting compensated. The calls from parents have increased over time and there’s definitely an increased crunch and close infant care but you can feel it changing now, as a provider. A lot of things our union is doing is for us really appreciate, most of it is coming. This is now a good time to be a child care provider, we just got an increase. We’re been waiting for that for a long time. Direct deposit is something that I’m looking forward to and the reimbursement rate/increase in the market rate is big. At this point, I think we’re finally starting to get paid for the job that we do.”

— Jill Asencio

Kadain Richardson reads to children in her home.

CSEA/VOICE Local 100A

Richardson

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CSEA/VOICE Page 3
The enacted New York State Budget includes unprecedented positive investments in child care, thanks to action by CSEA members.

Nearly 3,000 CSEA child care providers sent letters to elected officials urging them to prioritize child care. In March, more than 600 providers also turned out for a virtual press conference and lobby day with our coalition partners at the Empire State Campaign for Child Care.

As a result, child care had some major state budget victories for providers, as well as the children and families they serve, proving what we already know — the more people take action, the more we show our united strength and power.

The enacted budget, which reflects many providers’ asks, delivers a significant pay increase for providers serving children eligible for subsidy, increased access to subsidies and a significant decrease in co-payments for parents receiving subsidies.

Also for providers, the state expanded the subsidy eligibility timeframe from six to 12 months, increased paid absences, and provided a second round of grants to stabilize and expand child care small businesses with the aim of creating thousands of jobs.

The budget also expands a subsidy bridging program, facilitated enrollment, to Nassau and Suffolk counties. Currently, the program is administered by the Workforce Development Institute in Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Erie, Monroe, Oneida and Onondaga counties. This program helps people who are right over the income line for eligibility but who struggle financially just as much as those who qualify. Many CSEA members serve children whose family needs this program to stay afloat and keep working.

“As our union grows, so does our power,” former CSEA/VOICE Local 100A President Pam Wells said shortly after the budget was enacted. “We know power creates change and with more influence we can solve the issues we face. The pandemic hit providers hard, and I am grateful for our union. United with others in the profession and being able to get in front of those who make the decisions about our work was our vision back in 2002. In 2022, this is not just a vision but a reality. Thank you to all of the providers who took part in these advocacy campaigns.”

Learn more at cseany.org/issues.