

Rise

224 West 30th Street, Suite 804 | New York, NY 10001

www.risemagazing.org | 646-543-7099

November 11, 2021

The Honorable Governor Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

Rise and parents within the community write to urge you to sign and enact the Child Poverty Reduction Act, S.2755C/A.1160C. Signing this legislation would serve as a declaration from you and New York’s leaders of your intent to cut child poverty in half in ten years while advancing racial equity. Along with your support of the bill, Rise urges you to ensure the implementation of the 10-year plan includes investing funds directly into local grassroots organizations. Economic security, housing and health are significant factors that shape children’s wellbeing. Gaps in child care, housing stability and food result in child neglect allegations. New York State uses the child welfare system—also known as the family policing system, to punish parents for their financial conditions rather than focus on the root causes of poverty. The Child Poverty Reduction Act provides New York with the tools needed to reduce child poverty, which in turn will aid in implementing the structures required to support parents and families to receive the services they need.

Led by parents impacted by the child welfare system, Rise believes that parents have the answers for their families and communities. Our organization has worked with more than 350 parents nationwide to write about their experiences with the child welfare system. Our publication, [Rise Magazine](#), released an issue in 2017 on the consequences of parenting while poor. Parent contributor Jasmin shared in the publication: *“The cost of his daycare increased and I could no longer afford it [...] I quit school and for five months took care of my son during the week and only worked weekends. During that time, I felt panicked that we’d wind up in the shelter like many other foster youth. I also filled out the food stamp form incompletely and was left without food for two months.”*

In a [recent Rise interview](#), Dr. Frank Edwards, a professor at Rutgers University, stated, *“We treat widespread child poverty as if it’s a problem with parents rather than a problem with our*

social safety net, economy, housing and other factors that lead to families being in poverty and crisis.” Child neglect is defined broadly, and poverty is conflated with neglect. Institutions often report parents for suspected child maltreatment because they are living in poverty—hence 74.9% of child welfare cases are "neglect" cases¹.

Over the past year, in partnership with TakeRoot Justice, a team of six parents at Rise led a [participatory action research \(PAR\) project](#) to document the harms of the family policing system and develop a vision and plan for investing in structures of community care and support. A significant finding highlighted the importance of disentangling community supports and resources from systems that historically surveil parents and report them to child welfare for poverty-related issues. Specifically, parents advocated for free quality child care, housing, community centers and supports such as therapy to keep their children safe and help their families thrive without system involvement. Parents at Rise have also connected their traumatic experiences of child welfare system involvement to a lack of support around grief and mental health for themselves and their families. However, quality mental health services are financially out of reach for parents and children, and Medicaid coverage for mental health services is lacking. Investing in peer support and local organizations that provide mental and behavioral health and wellness services helps directly support communities and children. Child poverty is directly linked to overall poverty, and investing in communities helps to target conditions of poverty—rather than targeting individuals for their financial situation.

As New York mounts its recovery from the pandemic, this legislation will ensure that our children are centered in that recovery. Signing this legislation will signal to New York and the nation that your administration will prioritize the health and well-being of all New York children and parents.

We urge you to sign the Child Poverty Reduction Act into law and create the conditions for New York to meaningfully turn the tide of child poverty once and for all.

Sincerely,

Bianca Shaw, Co-Executive Director
Jeanette Vega, Co-Executive Director
Rise Staff

¹ <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/canstats.pdf>