



Child & Family Wellbeing Fund

Legislation creating a new Child and Family Wellbeing Fund would support children’s growth and development by investing resources in 10 communities that have been historically disenfranchised and targeted for government intervention through the child protective services (CPS)/child welfare system for 5 years. Established by New York law, the Fund would be an innovative approach to resourcing communities to support healthy children and families.

Budget Recommendation: Adopt the Assembly’s appropriation for the Communities Helping Improve Lives Daily (CHILD) program (\$50 million for program costs, \$30 million for capital projects) and A.63-A (Hevesi)/S.6431 (Brisport) in Article VII language.

Recent research has documented the incredible effects of **neighborhoods** on children:

- Health impacts
- Cognitive impacts
- Social mobility and lifelong earnings

Studies have also found that specific neighborhood enhancements can make a big difference:

- Safe playspaces and greenery
- Density of nonprofits and civic events
- Convenient access to critical family resources, like food and child care
- Vibrant social fabric

In short, everyday surroundings offer significant **advantages** to children *even if their own family is struggling*. Yet decades of redlining and racist disinvestment have resulted in vastly inequitable neighborhood conditions. We saw that indelibly in the pandemic. The Child and Family Wellbeing Fund is a chance to **make a corrective shift** to ensure that all New York children live within neighborhoods that are set up to support their well-being.

Description of the Child & Family Wellbeing Fund

- Supports the density of local nonprofits by investing in small groups that are usually locked out of government funding. *Only groups that are recommended by community members.*
- Resources trusted organizations. *This fund is only open to groups without ties to the CPS system.*
- Centers community expertise in resource decisions. *Advisory board include child welfare system-impacted parents and youth.*
- Intentionally invests in the social fabric. *It uses the Asset-Based Community Development model to build social capital and collective action.*
- Builds long-term community capacity. *Technical assistance to support growth is written in.*

- Reduces the likelihood of family involvement in the child protective system. *It invests in projects and resources known to reduce family stress and vulnerability to child welfare involvement.*
- Brings joy. *It supports family activities, community gatherings and neighborly care.*

Redefining Child Welfare: Promoting Child & Family Wellbeing

New York State’s “**family policy guidelines**” prioritize government support for families that promote “**safe, nurturing environments which support the healthy growth of all family members.**” However, the current framework of CPS/child welfare intervention investigates and prosecutes families for “neglect”—allegations related to parental inability to provide basic necessities. The majority of reports to the state child abuse hotline are made not for abuse, but for symptoms of poverty (i.e., homelessness, lack of transportation to school, inability to obtain medical care, lack of food and other basic needs, etc.). Parents earning low incomes are disproportionately reported to CPS for experiencing domestic violence or struggling with substance use, despite these situations impacting families regardless of socioeconomic status. Many families who live in communities that have been disenfranchised and targeted by CPS are in survival mode, with limited trusted options for support. In fact, many state-funded resources available in communities are staffed by mandated reporters whose presence makes many families uncomfortable due to the implicit threat of child welfare involvement.

The Fund’s Structure

How Does the New Fund Work?

The law creates a new **Child & Family Wellbeing Fund** office at the Department of State funding communities in 10 counties.

The law creates a 9-person **Advisory Board** to select the **Director** of the Fund and oversee its activities.

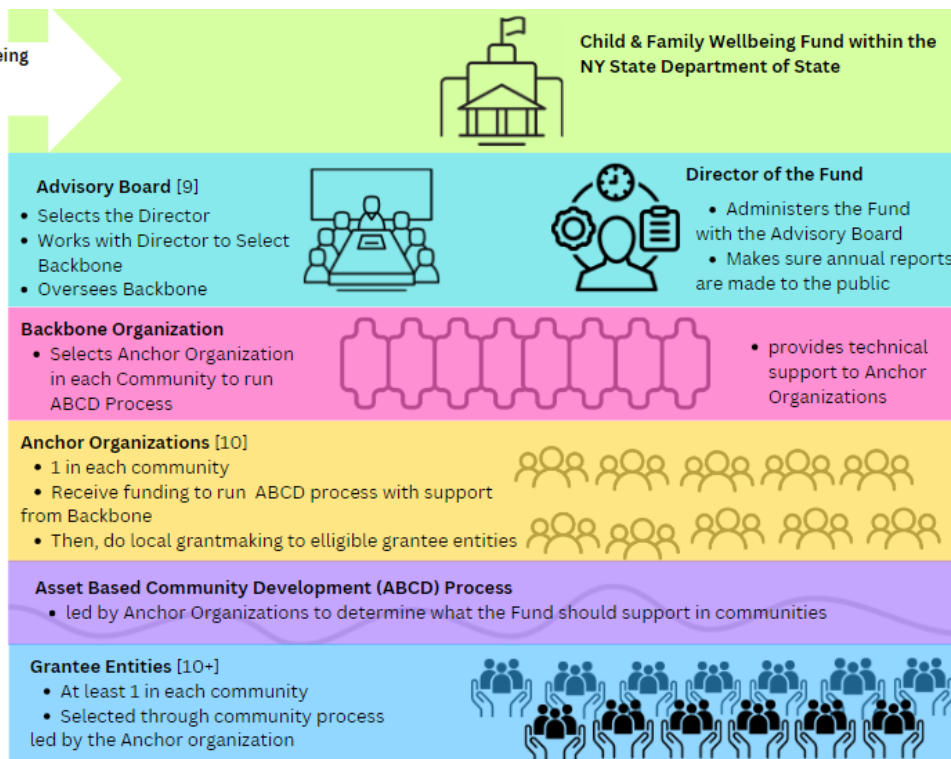
The **Director** and the **Advisory Board** work together to select a **Backbone** organization to provide technical assistance and hold the administrative burdens that keep most small groups from seeking state funds.

The **Backbone** selects 1 Anchor organization in each community [10].

Anchors receive funding to lead the **ABCD process**, assessing local assets supporting families and identifying gaps, and then administering a local grant-making process responsive to areas identified for investment. They receive TA from the Backbone.

Grantees are funded to respond to the community priorities identified in the ABCD process led by Anchor organizations in the 10 communities.

Funding supports grassroots **community assets that promote child and family wellbeing**, but have not been supported by state dollars, like mutual aid programs, emergency child care and peer support.



The Child and Family Wellbeing Fund redefines what “child welfare” means in New York by investing state dollars in local community-based organizations that provide families with basic necessities, and supporting formal and informal social structures that serve as enmeshed family and community protective factors, including material supports and mutual aid, doulas/maternal health, activities for children, and peer support groups.