

STATE OF NEW YORK

4578

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

February 10, 2023

Introduced by Sen. RAMOS -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Children and Families

AN ACT to amend the social services law, in relation to establishing the mothers and infants lasting change allowance

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "mothers
2 and infants lasting change ("MILC") allowance".

3 § 2. Legislative findings and intent. The legislature hereby finds and
4 declares that child poverty in New York city and cities across New York
5 state is shamefully high and will likely worsen if current economic
6 trends continue. Half of the top six cities in the United States with
7 the highest child poverty rates are in New York state, disproportionately
8 affecting communities and children of color. In New York city, nearly
9 1 in 4 children live in poverty. In Rochester and Buffalo, that number
10 is even higher: 1 in 2 children live in poverty.

11 The legislature hereby finds and declares that New Yorkers are unable
12 to cover their basic necessities and support their families, particularly
13 in the face of rising interest rates and inflation. Most notably, the
14 cost of childcare, which already consumes a massive portion of family
15 income, rose 41% during the pandemic, and the total cost of raising a
16 child through high school has risen to more than \$300,000, which is a
17 \$26,000 increase from five years ago and is likely to present a heavier
18 burden for low-income parents and families for whom expenses such as
19 food, housing, and gas comprise an even larger portion of their income.

20 The legislature hereby finds and declares there is overwhelming
21 evidence that the prenatal-to-three and early childhood development
22 period are critical for a child's future prospects and affects their
23 physical, mental, emotional and social outcomes over a lifetime. A
24 program targeting infants in this formative phase would help break the
25 intergenerational cycle of poverty rather than attempting to mitigate it

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 later on, creating a positive impact on children's lives and saving
2 government funds down the road.

3 The legislature hereby finds and declares it is proven that unre-
4 stricted cash is a direct and effective solution to alleviating poverty
5 and meeting needs for families. This was shown on a national level with
6 the overwhelming success of the expanded Child Tax Credit, which lifted
7 millions of children out of poverty with its monthly payments and led to
8 a 41% spike in child poverty the first month it expired. The unre-
9 stricted cash intervention further proved how an investment in the
10 earliest days of life can have multiplying effects: studies have found
11 that a permanent expansion of the expanded Child Tax Credit would have
12 generated 10 times as much revenue as it cost. New York state has
13 recently made a commitment through the Child Poverty Reduction Act in
14 December 2021 to reduce child poverty by 50% over the course of ten
15 years, with the support of the Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council,
16 and there is an opportunity for unrestricted cash to support this goal
17 and help the state reach its target.

18 Therefore, the legislature hereby finds and declares that New York
19 state has an opportunity and obligation to invest in its most vulnerable
20 residents by leading the fight against childhood poverty, and toward an
21 equitable economy for all, through a guaranteed income program for
22 infants.

23 § 3. Article 6 of the social services law is amended by adding a new
24 title 4-C to read as follows:

25 TITLE 4-C

26 MOTHERS AND INFANTS LASTING CHANGE ("MILC") ALLOWANCE

27 Section 409-o. Mothers and infants lasting change allowance.

28 § 409-o. Mothers and infants lasting change allowance. 1. Within one
29 year of the effective date of this section, the department shall estab-
30 lish a mothers and infants lasting change allowance pilot program to
31 support low-income families for three months of pregnancy and eighteen
32 months of a child's life. Such pilot program shall be in effect for
33 twenty-one months.

34 2. (a) The department, in coordination with local social services
35 districts, shall develop criteria that local social services districts
36 shall use to select a total of fifteen thousand eligible families for
37 participation in the program.

38 (b) Eligible individuals chosen for participation in the program shall
39 receive a subsidy of one thousand dollars per month for the last three
40 months of pregnancy and the first nine months of a child's life and five
41 hundred dollars per month for the last nine months of participation in
42 the program.

43 (c) The department shall allocate the necessary funds to local social
44 services districts for selected eligible selected participants.

45 (d) Monthly distributions shall be made by local social services
46 districts on the first of each month for the duration of the program to
47 the eligible selected participants.

48 3. Eligible participants shall:

49 (a) have an income which is below two hundred percent of the federal
50 poverty line. Such income shall be proven by providing one of the
51 following:

52 (i) a filed tax return from the previous year;

53 (ii) a letter from an employer documenting the dates of work of the
54 applicant and the yearly pay from the employer;

55 (iii) a W-2 or 1099 form from the previous tax year; or

1 (iv) a wage notice provided pursuant to section one hundred ninety-
2 five of the labor law that documents employment for a period of time
3 within six months prior to the date the applicant certifies that he or
4 she became eligible;

5 (b) participate in monthly surveys provided by the department; and

6 (c) meet any other criteria deemed necessary by the department.

7 4. Of the fifteen thousand eligible participants:

8 (a) Ten thousand participants shall reside in a city with a population
9 of two hundred thousand or more; and

10 (b) Five thousand participants shall reside in a rural area as defined
11 in section twenty-nine hundred fifty-one of the public health law.

12 5. The department, in coordination with local social services
13 districts, shall assist eligible participants with access to resources,
14 subsidy management, and anything else deemed necessary by the depart-
15 ment.

16 6. The department and local social services districts shall conduct a
17 monthly survey to determine the impact of the program. The department
18 shall prepare an interim report regarding the first twelve months of the
19 program which shall be completed by the eighteenth month of the program
20 and a final report shall be made no later than twelve months after the
21 completion of the twenty-one month program.

22 § 4. Paragraph (a) of subdivision 8 of section 131-a of the social
23 services law is amended by adding a new subparagraph (xi) to read as
24 follows:

25 (xi) Any financial assistance received by individuals from the mothers
26 and infants lasting change ("MILC") allowance. Such exemption and
27 disregard shall be applicable for the length of time the individual
28 receives the allowance. The commissioner shall seek federal waiver
29 authority to disregard the income from the mothers and infants lasting
30 change ("MILC") allowance for the purpose of the supplemental nutrition
31 assistance program.

32 § 5. This act shall take effect immediately.