

STATE OF NEW YORK

1597

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

January 10, 2025

Introduced by M. of A. CLARK, JACKSON, SIMON, LEVENBERG, HEVESI, GONZALEZ-ROJAS, MEEKS, SHRESTHA, EPSTEIN, BICHOTTE HERMELYN, DAVILA, SEAWRIGHT, McMAHON, TAPIA, GALLAGHER, KELLES, FORREST, ZACCARO, CUNNINGHAM, TAYLOR, BRONSON, OTIS, BORES, ROZIC, JACOBSON, LUNSFORD -- read once and referred to the Committee on Social Services

AN ACT to amend the social services law, in relation to establishing the baby bucks 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 "baby bucks
2 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, particular-
13 ly 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

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

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1 physical, mental, emotional and social outcomes over a lifetime. A
2 program targeting infants in this formative phase would help break the
3 intergenerational cycle of poverty rather than attempting to mitigate it
4 later on, creating a positive impact on children's lives and saving
5 government funds down the road.

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

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

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

28 TITLE 4-C

29 BABY BUCKS ALLOWANCE

30 Section 409-o. Baby bucks allowance.

31 § 409-o. Baby bucks allowance. 1. Within one year of the effective
32 date of this section, the department shall establish a baby bucks allow-
33 ance pilot program to support low-income families for three months of
34 pregnancy and eighteen months of a child's life. Such pilot program
35 shall be in effect for twenty-one months.

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

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

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

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

50 3. Eligible participants shall:

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

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

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

1 (iii) a W-2 or 1099 form from the previous tax year; or
 2 (iv) a wage notice provided pursuant to section one hundred ninety-
 3 five of the labor law that documents employment for a period of time
 4 within six months prior to the date the applicant certifies that they
 5 became eligible;

6 (b) participate in monthly surveys provided by the department; and
 7 (c) meet any other criteria deemed necessary by the department.

8 4. Of the fifteen thousand eligible participants:

9 (a) Ten thousand participants shall reside in a city with a population
 10 of one hundred forty thousand or more; and

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

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

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

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

26 (xiv) any financial assistance received by individuals from the baby
 27 bucks allowance. Such exemption and disregard shall be applicable for
 28 the length of time the individual receives the allowance. The commis-
 29 sioner shall seek federal waiver authority to disregard the income from
 30 the baby bucks allowance for the purpose of the supplemental nutrition
 31 assistance program.

32 § 5. This act shall take effect immediately.