

Parents to feel the pinch as subsidized day-care funds on Mayor Bloomberg's chopping block ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Parents who work for poverty-level wages will not be able to enroll their kids in city-subsidized child-care programs next year, under Mayor Bloomberg's 2012 budget plan.

Although 16,000 seats that faced the chopping block due to loss of federal funding will now be saved, children new to the Administration for Children's Services programs will be turned away.

"We're not expanding the program," said Bloomberg spokesman Marc Lavorgna, noting that children currently holding a seat within the agency's programs are guaranteed a spot next year.

The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families says that will leave thousands of the working poor without affordable, safe child care.

"There's more funding for those on welfare but not the working families," said Elba Montalvo, president of the CHCF. "These families can't cover all their expenses - they need this. There's not enough help for the working poor."

Elena Almonte, 39, of Kingsbridge Heights, a single mother of two toddlers, brings home \$200 weekly from her hairdresser job, and would be lost without help.

"This child care is very important to my kids - and to me. I'm the mother, I'm the father and I'm raising these kids alone," Almonte said in Spanish through a translator.

"I would have to quit my job if it weren't for these programs," she said. "What will these families do? My kids learn so much and develop their social skills - they're getting prepared for when it's time for them to enter school."

Almonte was joined by Councilman Fernando Cabrera (D-Bronx), the CHCF officials and other parents who count on the services last week outside Happy Faces Family Group Day Care, to raise awareness of the issue.

"These parents right now are barely making it - they need this extra assistance," Cabrera said. "The government is not trying their best to help the working families."

"These centers not only provide educational structures for the children but also make sure they get proper nutrition with their meals," said Karla Coreas, network coordinator for CHCF that places kids ages six weeks to 12 years old.

"If these parents can't afford to send them to child care, they will be forced to stay at home in front of the TV with a baby-sitter, or someone who's not licensed and they won't be learning," Coreas said. "Parents might need to place them in an unsafe environment that could harm the child."

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- reprinted from the NY Daily News

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