

ASSEMBLY, No. 2252

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 222nd LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2026 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman SHANIQUE SPEIGHT

District 29 (Essex and Hudson)

Assemblywoman YVONNE LOPEZ

District 19 (Middlesex)

Assemblywoman VERLINA REYNOLDS-JACKSON

District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman Haider, Assemblyman Schnall, Assemblywomen Park, Dunn, Assemblymen Danielsen, E. Rodriguez and Walker

SYNOPSIS

Increases Work First New Jersey Child Care appropriation by \$28 million in FY2026 annual appropriations act to ensure full funding of child care subsidy program.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/9/2026)

1 A SUPPLEMENT to the annual appropriations act for the fiscal year
2 ending June 30, 2026, P.L.2025, c.74.

3

4 BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and the General Assembly of the
5 State of New Jersey:

6

7 1. The following item and language provision in section 1 of
8 P.L.2025, c.74, the annual appropriations act for the fiscal year
9 ending June 30, 2026, are amended as follows:

10

11 54 DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

12 50 Economic Planning, Development, and Security

13 53 Economic Assistance and Security

14 7550 Division of Family Development

15

16 GRANTS-IN-AID

17

15-7550 Income Maintenance Management ~~[\$616,711,000]~~ \$644,711,000

18

Total Grants-in-Aid appropriation,

19

Division of Family Development ~~[\$616,711,000]~~ \$644,711,000

20

Grants-in-Aid:

21

15 Work First New Jersey Child Care ~~[\$565,805,000]~~ (\$593,805,000)

22

23 Notwithstanding the provisions of section 2 of P.L.1993, c.46
24 (C.30:5B-31) or any other law or regulation to the contrary, ~~of~~
25 the amounts hereinabove appropriated for Work First New Jersey
26 Child Care and for the avoidance of doubt, ~~the~~ Commissioner of
27 Human Services, ~~in~~ consultation with the Division of Family
28 Development, is authorized to pause or terminate acceptance of
29 applications for child care assistance in the event that projected
30 program expenditures exceed the amount hereinabove
31 appropriated for Work First New Jersey Child Care, subject to
32 the approval of the Director of the Division of Budget and
33 Accounting; provided, however, that in the event that sufficient
34 funding is determined to be available, applications received
35 during the time period that enrollment is reopened, as determined
36 by the Director of the Division of Family Development, shall be
37 prioritized in the following order: (1) families at or below 100%
38 of the federal poverty level; (2) Temporary Assistance for Needy
39 Families children; (3) children under the auspices of Child
40 Protective Services; (4) children with special needs/disabilities,
41 and (5) all other children. ~~shall 1) discontinue any pause in the~~
42 processing of applications for child care assistance and approve
43 eligibility for any applicant who meets standards that are no
44 more rigorous than the eligibility criteria in place on June 30,
45 2025; and 2) implement family copayments for child care

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets ~~thus~~ in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

1 assistance which are no more than those family copayments in
2 place on June 30, 2025.

3

4 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

5

6

7

STATEMENT

8

9 This bill increases the Work First New Jersey Child Care
10 appropriation by \$28 million, from \$565.8 million to \$593.8
11 million, in the FY2026 annual appropriations act. This line item
12 supports the State's child care subsidy program, which assists
13 lower-income families by paying a portion of their child care
14 expenses.

15 During the FY2026 Budget proceedings, the Commissioner of
16 Human Services stated that the Governor's Budget
17 Recommendation underfunded the child care subsidy program by
18 approximately \$25 to \$30 million and, as a result, the Department
19 of Human Services would need to pause enrollment and increase
20 family copayments under this program at an unknown point in
21 FY2026. Accordingly, on August 1, 2025 the child care subsidy
22 program ceased accepting new applications for its largest eligibility
23 group, the child care assistance program, and increased family
24 copayments for this eligibility group from one to five percent of a
25 family's income to two to six percent of a family's income.

26 This bill appropriates an additional \$28 million for the State's
27 child care subsidy program, the balance of the funding shortfall
28 projected by the Commissioner of Human Services after a \$2.0
29 million increase was incorporated in the FY2026 annual
30 appropriations act by the Legislature, to ensure the full operation of
31 this critical program. The bill also removes budget language newly
32 added in the FY2026 annual appropriations act that clarifies that the
33 department may suspend the acceptance of applications for child
34 care subsidies in the event of insufficient funding. Under the bill,
35 budget language is added that requires the Commissioner of Human
36 Services to resume the acceptance of applications for child care
37 assistance and implement family copayments, at no more rigorous
38 standards than those in place on June 30, 2025, thereby returning
39 the program to its pre-August 1 policies.