

Families Together

in New York State

2022 FTNYS Policy Agenda

Families Together in New York State is a family-run organization that represents families of children with social, emotional, behavioral health and cross-systems challenges. Our goal is to ensure that *ALL* families and youth have the support they need in order to succeed. We represent thousands of families from across the state whose children have been involved in many systems including mental health, substance abuse, special education, juvenile justice, and foster care. Our board and staff are made up primarily of family members and youth who have been involved in these systems.

Families Together 2022 Policy Agenda is created by families of children and youth with social, emotional, behavioral and cross-systems challenges.

Address the Children's Behavioral Health Crisis

GOAL: All children, youth and their families must have timely, affordable access to appropriate children's behavioral health services within their community regardless of their insurance status.

Comprehensive Rate Reform for CFTSS, HCBS, Clinics, and Residential Treatment Facilities and Workforce Investments so that rates cover the costs of providing services and support the full range of activities a clinic provides and addresses the worsening youth mental health crisis. This includes:

- **An over \$100M investment to increase rates of reimbursement for children's behavioral health services.**
- **Continued enhanced funding for Child and Family Treatment and Support Services (CFTSS) and Home and Community Based Services (HCBS).**

Expand Children and Family Treatment and Support Services (CFTSS) into Child Health Plus (CHP) (A303A/ S2539).

Expand 1650 Aid to Localities funding to offer operational support to local Family and Youth Peer Support programs.

Authorize the 5.4% Consumer Price Index-U (CPI-U) Adjustment for Community Health Organizations in the statutory Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) and extend this to CFTSS and HCBS providers.

Amend telehealth reforms to ensure telehealth rate parity between audio, audio-video, and in-person (S.5505/A6256)

Fully fund implementation of the 988 crisis line.

Create a permanent funding model to ensure at least one Youth Clubhouse exists in each county.

Create a Black Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force to reverse troubling trends in Black youth suicide in New York (S3408/A1716).

Put Families First in Child Welfare

GOAL: A “family first” system that recognizes the value of keeping families together when possible and ensures that, when necessary, children are placed with well-supported relatives or foster families.

Adopt the broad use of Family Peer Advocates (FPAs) and Youth Peer Advocates (YPAs) in the Child Welfare system.

Pass the Children and Families Reinvestment Act to establish a funding stream dedicated for primary prevention, maintain the existing prevention continuum, and establish Universal Child Care for all New Yorkers.

Expand access to timely and high quality parental legal representation statewide by adding \$9M to the Office of Indigent Legal Services budget.

Create an independent Office of the Child Welfare Advocate to promote transparency and accountability in the child welfare system.

Pass the Families Over Facilities Act to restrict the placement of child under 13 in congregate care and incentivize family-based care for children of all ages through enhanced foster boarding home rates.

Pass a Miranda Bill of Rights for parents under CPS investigation and end anonymous retaliatory CPS calls.

Merge the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program with the open-ended funding adoption subsidy to establish parity between the two permanency options.

Create a unified statewide kinship navigator service that consolidates existing local programs and fund it at \$10 million dollars.

Achieve Youth Justice

GOAL: A system that is restorative in nature which emphasizes developmentally appropriate approaches to holding young people accountable:

Expand sealing protections for youth age 25 and younger who face the threat of permanent criminal convictions and adult prison sentences with the Youth Justice & Opportunities Act (A3536A/S5749A)

Protect historic 'Raise the Age' youth justice reforms from any rollbacks that would weaken the intended effect of the law.

Embrace a Public Health Response to Gun Violence that includes:

- community-based violence intervention,
- high-quality youth engagement programs, including credible messengers
- youth employment programs
- comprehensive civil legal services for young people facing barriers to employment, housing, accessing public benefits, or any other legal need,
- Investments in green spaces, affordable housing, and safe public spaces.

Reinvest funding from juvenile justice facility closures and expand Supervision/Treatment Services for Juvenile Program funding.

Pass the Right 2 Remain Silent bill (S2800) to protect juveniles during police interrogations.

Prohibit the Use of Chemical Agents by Police Against Minors (S4002).

Establish a comprehensive community mental health emergencies mental health emergencies that do not rely on police.

Promote Safe and Supportive Schools

GOAL: End the school-to-prison pipeline and ensure that schools are safe and supportive environments for all students:

Pass the Solutions Not Suspensions Act (A5197/S7198) and embrace youth, parent, and educator-led solutions that center restorative justice in place of policing infrastructure, practice, and culture from New York State public schools.

Fund school-based mental health programs, school climate and restorative justice practices within New York's public schools

Support the NYS School Mental Health Resource Training Center.

Develop multiple pathways to a high school diploma beyond high stakes testing.