



70 West 36th Street, Fifth Floor, New York, NY 10018
Tel: 212-967-0322 Fax: 212-967-0792 www.unhny.org

Memorandum in Support of S 2091 Montgomery / A 3657 Scarborough
An act to amend the social services law, in relation to eligibility
requirements for child care assistance:
Legislation to remove the Court Ordered Child Support Requirement

UNH supports S2091 / A3657 which will prevent an applicant or recipient of subsidized child care from being required to pursue court ordered child support as a condition of eligibility. S2091 / A3657 removes a barrier to accessing child care that has unfortunately prevented many low-income parents from obtaining child care subsidies. Under current state regulations, a single parent seeking child care subsidies must first prove that they have obtained a court order for child support from a non-custodial parent. Child care providers have reported that this requirement has led to the loss of applications from single parents. It is deeply disturbing that this requirement restricts child care options for single parents families for whom it is often impossible to continue to remain employed without finding a child care provider.

Focused efforts are needed to assist custodial parents to collect financial support from noncustodial parents. State and local government must continue to encourage single parents to seek child support from non-custodial parents and should receive assistance with locating missing non-custodial parents and providing legal advice to custodial parents seeking child support. However, there is no evidence that this policy has led to any increase in child support collections. Moreover, it has created a barrier to social services that impacts a custodial parent and their child. This is a misguided policy. Single parents must not be penalized for the failure of non-custodial parents to provide for their children in what may already be a challenging situation.

For many single parents, the court order requirement dissuades them from seeking a child care subsidy. Single parents who have an informal support agreement with a non-custodial parent will often choose not to risk that agreement by seeking a court order. Similarly, single parents who are worried about acts of retaliation against them or against their child may forgo seeking a child support order. In other situations, single parents have not sought court orders because they know that even with a court order they would not be able to collect funds from the non-custodial parent. This can occur when the identity of the non-custodial parent is unknown or when the non-custodial parent is in another country or is incarcerated. Several providers have reported that single parents have discontinued their search for a child care subsidy after learning of their requirement.

A child care provider in East Harlem reported that, over a six month period, 21 single parents told staff members that the court ordered child support requirement was the reason that they had withdrawn their application for a child care subsidy.

UNH supports the City and State actively encouraging the collection of child support from noncustodial parents. However, the court ordered child support requirement deleteriously impacts custodial parents and their children. The experience of our member agencies and other child care providers indicates that this practice has led many families to abandon quality child care programs. S2091 / A3657 will remove this barrier to accessing child care subsidies and ensure that many more single-parent families in New York will have access to child care subsidies.

For more information, please contact Gregory Brender at (212) 967-0322 x330 or Gbrender@unhny.org.

United Neighborhood Houses (UNH), founded in 1919, is the membership organization of New York City settlement houses and community centers. Rooted in the history and values of the settlement house movement, UNH promotes and strengthens the neighborhood-based, multi-service approach to improving the lives of New Yorkers in need and the communities in which they live. UNH's membership comprises one of the largest human service systems in New York City, with 34 agencies working at more than 400 sites to provide high quality services and activities to a half million New Yorkers each year. UNH supports its members through policy development, advocacy and capacity-building activities.

UNH Members: CAMBA-Center for Family Life in Sunset Park - Chinese American Planning Council - Citizens Advice Bureau - Claremont Neighborhood Centers - Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation - East Side House Settlement - Educational Alliance - Goddard Riverside Community Center - Grand Street Settlement - Greenwich House - Hamilton-Madison House - Hartley House - Henry Street Settlement - Hudson Guild - Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement House - Kingsbridge Heights Community Center - Lenox Hill Neighborhood House - Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center - Mosholu Montefiore Community Center - Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation - Project Hospitality - Queens Community House - Riverdale Neighborhood House - SCAN New York - School Settlement Association - Shorefront YM-WHA of Brighton-Manhattan Beach, Inc - Southeast Bronx Neighborhood Centers - St. Matthew's and St. Timothy's Neighborhood Center - St. Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation - Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center - Sunnyside Community Services - Third Street Music School Settlement - Union Settlement Association - United Community Centers - University Settlement Society