

Her Justice is advancing legislation to improve the fairness and efficiency of the New York child support system and ensure that children receive the most support parents can afford.

The Need for Reform

Why go through lengthy litigation when there is a more efficient alternative?

In New York, child support is determined with a one-size-fits-all approach with both complicated and straightforward cases litigated in court. Some cases are best served by this process because parents do not agree on how much income is available to support their children. Others, however, are simple and do not need to be resolved through litigation.

Despite these distinctions, **more than 150,000 child support cases** pass through the same courthouse doors each year in New York. This volume causes serious delays and inefficiencies that many cannot afford. Custodial parents often must miss work and pay for childcare to appear in court for a succession of brief hearings that can drag on for months before finally reaching resolution. Parents in New York deserve a greater “menu of options” — including an expedited settlement conference as an alternative for those who can agree on a child support amount — which will make the system more efficient for all.

What would this legislation do?

- **Create an expedited settlement conference process** in each Family Court in the State in which parents could voluntarily engage with the option to request a hearing if they cannot reach agreement.
- **Build on existing authority** for courts to approve parents’ agreements for child support that are consistent with NYS child support guidelines and procedure.
- **Provide a needed and efficient alternative** to litigation in court for parents who do not dispute child support amounts, expanding the “menu of options” for all parents in New York State.
- **Allow the courts to dedicate time and resources to complicated matters**, helping the courts achieve greater efficiency of operations when most needed.
- **Build in accountability measures** for the Office of Court Administration to publish data annually about the effectiveness and impact of the conference option.

New York would join at least 25 other states with more efficient child support systems.

More than half the states in the U.S. — including Pennsylvania, Illinois, and recently Massachusetts — use an expedited process for some undisputed child support matters. These states have had great success with non-litigated processes.

- **Texas** implemented an expedited process more than 20 years ago to address a backlog in child support cases in court; cases that go through the administrative process are now resolved in almost **half the time** on average as judicial actions, shortening the time between when a parent seeks support and receives it for their family.
- **Massachusetts** implemented a conference process during the COVID-19 pandemic to address a backlog in child support cases in court, allowing virtual conferences, and resolved **over 14,000 cases** in one year.
- **Vermont's** use of expedited conferences as alternatives to litigated processes increased the rate of attendance of both parents by almost **32 percent**, increased the proportion of cases with stipulations reached by **over 91 percent**, and decreased the time between opening a case and reaching stipulation by almost **73 percent**.

You can help us advance a fairer justice system for parents pursuing child support.

Contact Her Justice to learn more about this legislation and to support this important policy reform:

Rachel Braunstein, Director, Policy
rbraunstein@herjustice.org
646-442-1192