



Early Childhood Policy Committee

Family Access and Federal Policy Subcommittee Recommendations for Annual Report

August 27, 2026

TASK

- Develop the Subcommittee's share of ECPC's 2026 recommendations, as required by AB 563's mandate for the Council's Annual Report to the Legislature and Governor.
- Scope set by the full Council: 5 priority topics drawn from the ECPC 2026–27 Budget Priorities letter, divided across two subcommittees to avoid duplication.
- Focus area: family access and the risks created by the shifting federal policy landscape.

PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE THE REVIEW

- **Build on Existing Leadership.** Respect and build on the work already led by families, advocates, providers, and researchers rather than reinventing it.
- **Respond to Family Realities.** Respond to the instability families face amid federal policy shifts, safety-net threats, housing insecurity, and immigration concerns.
- **Draw on Collective Expertise.** Draw on the Council's collective expertise and lived experience.

GROUNDING IN EXISTING WORK

- Reviewed public comment and stakeholder input submitted through ECPC meetings to date.
- Reviewed historical ECPC Annual Reports, the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care, and the Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission report.
- Reviewed materials from provider and workforce organizations, equity-focused early childhood organizations, research and policy institutes, and national early childhood policy and advocacy groups.

Process for Developing ECPC Recommendations



2026 Annual Report Recommendation Process

- **May 27:** Robust discussion with ECPC
- **June 9:** Joint PAC/WAC discussion
- **June – August:** Review of California Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education, Master Plan for Early Learning and Care, past ECPC discussions and recommendations*
- **Today:** ECPC discussion, questions, and public comment
- **September 21:** New draft presented for discussion at PAC/WAC
- **November 19:** Final recommendations presented to ECPC for approval

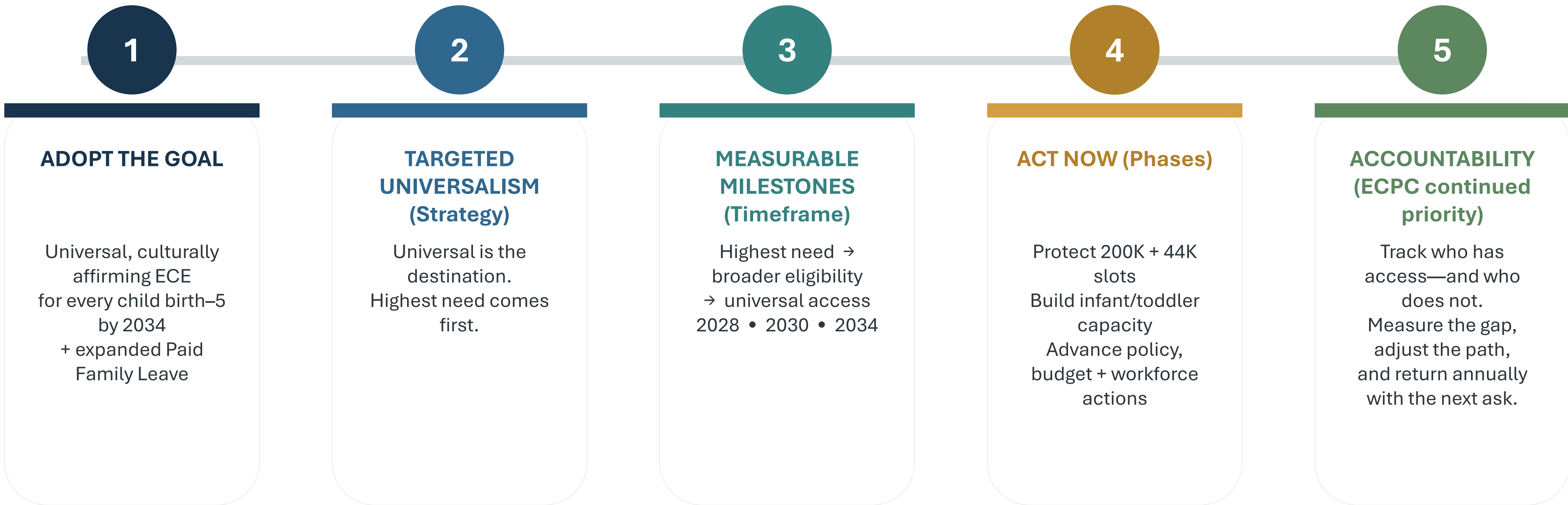
Today we seek to:

- Establish where there is unity and alignment on the recommendations
- Answer questions and clarify the proposed recommendations
- Hear additions and proposed changes
- Identify areas where additional discussion or information is needed

Comments will inform the next draft presented prior to the September 21 PAC/WAC meeting.

PROPOSAL:

By 2034, every child in California, from birth through age five, has access to culturally affirming early care and education that meets their family’s needs and choices, with Paid Family Leave supporting families from the very beginning.



The Foundation: This proposal builds on a review of more than a decade of California early childhood policy and recommendations (including the Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission, the Master Plan, and ECPC’s own work) alongside research and perspectives from providers, workforce and equity organizations, policy institutes, and national early childhood leaders.

Key Recommendations:

Universal, Culturally Affirming Access to Early Care and Education, Prenatal and Perinatal Support, and Paid Family Leave

Universal Access:

Every child in California has access to early care and education, support during pregnancy and after birth when needed, and paid family leave.

Just as with TK-12, every child, from before birth through age five and their family gets what it takes to thrive.

Access towards the universal goal will increase for all eligible children in the family incrementally each year by income level beginning with ensuring access for all those at or below the poverty level.

Progress towards universal access and targeted investments will occur simultaneously

Targeted Universalism



- The voices of diverse communities and their particular vision, strengths and needs. are key to planning and implementation
- The path includes focused policies and investments for families facing the greatest barriers first to ensure we reach everyone.
 - Families navigating economic and systemic hardship
 - Families and children affected by racial inequity
 - Multilingual and Dual Language Learner families
 - Tribal communities.

Targeted Universalism (continued)

Families facing the greatest barriers

Families with additional care needs

- Children and families with disabilities, mental health needs, or other special health care needs
- Children connected to the child welfare or foster care system
- Survivors of domestic violence
- Children with Incarcerated and recently released parents
- Families facing housing insecurity
- Expecting and young parents, including those transitioning out of foster care

Three Foundations That Make the Targeted Strategy Real

- A poverty metric with teeth. The state should examine poverty metrics, including the California Poverty Measure (CPM) and other options
- A shared definition of "culturally affirming," that can be enforced, not just invoked built on current language
- A live tracking tool, not a one-time report

Three Phases:

Phase 1 - Immediate 2027

- Finish current funding commitments
- Guarantee continuous eligibility across siblings
- Prioritize pregnant and parenting foster youth within existing Prevention Infrastructure
- Establish cost baseline
- Adopt shared definition culturally affirming
- Direct LAO study on needs and disparities

Three Phases:

Phase 2 - Mid-term 2027-2030

- Sequencing capacity building by income level and age
- Investing in Infant toddler capacity
- Study including targeted communities and families
- Refresh and advance 2024 ECPC Comprehensive mixed delivery Proposals
- Develop multilayered funding model
- Establish tracking mechanism for targeted universalism

Three Phases:

Phase 3: Long Term 2030-2034

- Sustain and adjust funding and accountability structures
- Complete capacity investments for 0-3
- Expand Paid Family Leave
- Reach universal access by 2034

Discussion Questions:

Discussion 1

- Where do you have **strong alignment**?
- What **clarifying questions** do you have?
- What **additions** should be considered?
- What **proposed changes or alternative approaches** would strengthen the recommendations?

Key Recommendations:

Safety Net and Response to Federal Destabilization

- Protect Medi-Cal Coverage and Streamline State Requirements
- Preserve Food Assistance and Reduce the CalFresh Error Rate
- Counter the Federal Fraud Narrative Without Adopting Punitive Systems
- Protect Federal ECE Funding including Head Start and CCDF Reauthorization

Key Recommendations: Immigrant Family Protection

- Increase Legal Services and Continue Legal Action Against Federal Overreach
- Strengthen Rapid Response and Cross-Agency Coordination

Discussion Questions:

Discussion 2

- Where do you have **strong alignment**?
- What **clarifying questions** do you have?
- What **additions** should be considered?
- What **proposed changes or alternative approaches** would strengthen the recommendations?

Next Steps:

- Summarize Key Themes
- Next Draft Presented to PAC/WAC in September