



A Letter from the Early Childhood Policy Council February 26, 2026

Governor Gavin Newsom, State of
California

Speaker Robert Rivas, California State
Assembly

President pro Tempore Monique Limón,
California State Senate

Senator John Laird, Chair, Senate
Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel,
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee

Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry,
Chair, Women's Legislative Caucus

Senator Caroline Menjivar, Vice Chair,
Women's Legislative Caucus

Dear Governor, Madam President pro Tem, Mr. Speaker, Chairs, and Vice Chair:

The Early Childhood Policy Council (ECPC), established in law in 2019¹, advises the Governor, Legislature, and the California Department of Social Services on statewide early learning and care and child development policy.

While we recognize that California faces significant budget challenges, driven by projections of chronic multi-year deficits, the devastating wildfire recovery, and the federal attack on our most vulnerable Californians, we believe it is essential to protect the state's youngest members and their families.

We want to acknowledge the State's investments that significantly impacted children, families, and early educators—predominantly from communities of color—including extending the hold harmless policy, supporting rate reform and the development of a single rate structure, funding Universal Transitional Kindergarten expansion, the Cost of Care Plus extension, maintaining funding for social safety net programs including child care, as well as preserving critical health and social services programs that support child and family well-being—including the Emergency Child Care Bridge Program, Medi-Cal, CalWORKs, and your commitment to expanding access to public education.

We recognize the efforts you are making as you embark on the State Budget development process for State Fiscal Year 2026-27, and we look forward to the Administration and Legislature upholding the investments needed, cited above, and in the January budget proposal, as well as:

- Funding the rate reform to ensure compensation for the true cost of care and at rates reflecting economic realities.
- Funding the promised 200,000 child care spaces by Budget Year 2026-27, the additional 44,000 slots originally promised, and a commitment to continuing to backfill declining Proposition 64 revenue to ensure current spaces are maintained and expanded. Inaction will result in families being disenrolled or children losing access to child care.
- Providing support for child care policy changes that build a more resilient ECE ecosystem, prioritizing provider-centered fiscal reforms that ensure operational stability by moving towards enrollment-based funding models, such as an 85% contract-earning floor to protect providers from the fiscal shocks of fluctuating attendance.

¹ See Welfare and Institutions Code 10320.

- Providing support for policy changes that promote regulatory clarity and the development of unified program definition packages to support the field with clear, standardized roadmaps for administration and planning, to reduce burnout and administrative overhead.
- Providing ongoing financial support to attract and retain members of the early childhood education workforce, and support policies that create career pathways that reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of the workforce while removing barriers to entry by ensuring that professional development and certification pathways value the lived experience and diverse educational backgrounds.
- Protecting health care access for young children, families, and early educators by protecting Medi-Cal coverage through continuous coverage policies and additional eligibility flexibilities that are threatened by the federal administration.
- Protecting housing security and grant funding to cities and counties that support our unhoused population, many of whom are women and children from communities of color.
- Protecting the safety and well-being of our immigrant children and families, as well as the many immigrant members of the child care work force, including by bolstering legal services programs and reversing proposals that would cut health care for many immigrants.
- Strengthening safety net policies that provide long term support to reduce poverty and promote economic stability and invest funds to replace those safety net funds cut by HR1.

We must ensure there is equitable access to services and support for families and the workforce, particularly marginalized populations, including Black, Tribal, and People of Color families, immigrant families, homeless families, foster children, children of incarcerated or formerly incarcerated parents, children with disabilities, dual language learners, and low-income families, including those experiencing generational poverty. We look forward to sharing our assessment and proposals in our upcoming Annual Report.

As your partners in helping California families with young children navigate today's exponentially more complex federal and environmental challenges, and in supporting the early care and learning workforce that provides essential services to California's economy, we look forward to working with you to ensure our children remain a top priority.

Sincerely,

Early Childhood Policy Council