



Early Childhood Policy Council

May 20, 2024

Governor Gavin Newsom, State of California

Speaker Robert Rivas, California State Assembly

President pro Tempore Mark McGuire, California State Senate

Senator Scott Weiner
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel,
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee

Senator Nancy Skinner,
Chair, Women's Legislative Caucus

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

Copy to Tony Thurmond, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dear Governor, Mr. Pro Tem, Mr. Speaker, Chairs, and Vice Chair:

The Early Childhood Policy Council (ECPC) was established in law via Senate Bill 75 (Chapter 51, Statutes of 2019) to advise the Governor, Legislature, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction on statewide early learning and care policy.

While we respect the challenges California is facing in the current budget, we believe it is important to maintain the Administration's and Legislature's commitment to California's youngest members, their families, and early childhood care providers, as demonstrated in the 2023-24 State Budget.

Specifically, we want to acknowledge the State's historic investments that made a significant impact on children, families, and early educators – predominantly from communities of color – which include transforming the family fees, extending the hold harmless policy, and providing increased funding to child care providers and programs to keep their doors open. In addition, with your leadership, California adopted in the 2022-23 Budget a continuous Medi-Cal coverage protection for young children ages 0-5.

We also recognize and appreciate the Administration's establishment of the Rate and Quality Workgroup – and now the Rate and Quality Advisory Panel – to address the state's woefully inadequate reimbursement rate structure. We look forward to the Administration's and Legislature's adoption of the Panel's recommendations in the forthcoming report, expected July 1, 2024, to establish a regionalized reimbursement rate that:

1. Compensates all teachers and child care providers for **the true cost of providing care** by reimbursing them at rates that reflect the economic diversity of California;
2. Recognizes the costs of meeting varying quality standards and regulations; and,
3. Strengthens the ability of the state's mixed delivery system to provide quality options.

As you embark on the State Budget development process for State Fiscal Year 2024-25, we look forward to the Administration and Legislature upholding the investments cited above, as well as:

- Maintaining the promise to fund 200,000 child care slots by Budget Year 2025-26;
- Providing ongoing financial support to attract and retain members of the ECE workforce; and,
- Funding and greenlighting the Medi-Cal continuous coverage policy so that DHCS can make this protection operational by January 2025.

We must ensure there is equitable access to services and supports 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.

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

Sincerely,

Early Childhood Policy Council