



## Early Childhood Policy Council Meeting Summary: June 9, 2021

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**Attendees:** Kim Johnson, Ann Louise Bonnitto, Antoinette Jacobs, Carola Oliva-Olson, Cherie Schroeder, Cheryl Polk, Dean Tagawa, Deborah Corley, Debra Ward, Donna Sneeringer, Giannina Perez, Janet Zamudio, Kim Patillo Brownson, Kris Perry, Lissette Frausto, Lupe-Jaime Mileham, Mary Ignatius, Mayra E. Alvarez, Miren Algorri, Natali Gaxiola, Patricia Alexander, Patricia Lozano, Patrick MacFarlane, Paula Merrigan, Robin Layton, Sarah Neville-Morgan, Scott Moore, Sonia Jaramillo, Stephanie Myers, Tonia McMillian, Virginia Eigen, Yenni Rivera, Zoila Carolina Toma

### 1. Welcome and Introductions (Kim Johnson)

- In her opening remarks, Chair Kim Johnson welcomed the Council and members of the public to the meeting. Johnson expressed her gratitude to the Council for developing the letter containing budget recommendations for the Governor, Legislature, and Superintendent of Public Instruction. Chair Johnson presented an overview of the meeting structure and introduced council members, Lissette Frausto and Miren Algorri, who shared insights regarding the experiences of parents with young children and the early childhood workforce.
- Lissette Frausto shared several challenges she faced as a parent during the pandemic including the impacts of preschool/child care provider closures and impact on parent employment. She also underscored the important of mental health supports for children, especially those with special needs. She noted that both of her children struggled with changes in socialization and routine disruption. Lissette also highlighted the critical need for access to fresh, healthy meals and the importance of investments for child care and summer programs that allow parents to return to work.
- Miren Algorri shared her experiences as a licensed family child care provider, including the importance of increasing wages for workers. She specifically notes



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that with the federal stimulus and state surplus, the time is right to make these critical investments to worker compensation.

### **2. State Budget Update**

- ECPC Chair and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Executive Director, Kim Johnson, and California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHSA) Deputy Secretary, Kris Perry, presented an overview of the Governor's state budget proposal.
- Chair Johnson presented an overview of several May revision proposals including proposals for immediate relief to address child poverty, investments to transform public schools into gateways for opportunity, direct investments in child care and development, and investments in local services, community-based services and supports.
- Deputy Secretary Perry presented May revision proposals across other state departments within the CHHSA including investments in transforming the youth behavioral system, efforts to expand Medi-Cal service eligibility and service provisions, and investments to support youth behavioral health education and outreach programs.

### **3. Child Care Program Transition Quarterly Report**

California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Deputy Director of the Child Care and Development Division, Dr. Lupe Jaime-Mileham, presented an overview of the Child Care Program Transition Quarterly Report. Her presentation included information on the following topics: contracts, trailer bill requirements addressed through the transition, website and communication, new online resources describing transition-related efforts, contractor programmatic contacts, stakeholder engagement efforts supporting the transition, and the details regarding the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) transition.



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### **4. What Families Need Now**

- Council member and Children’s Partnership President, Mayra Alvarez, facilitated a panel discussion around the experiences and needs of families. Alvarez kicked off the panel by presenting results from a poll conducted by EdTrust-West. The poll results reflected responses from 600 parents of young children and covered several key topics including: struggles with health care, impact on children’s development and wellbeing, pandemic impact, and recommendations on how to move forward with public investments in early childhood.
- Following Alvarez’s presentation, Chair Johnson described efforts the state is taking to enhance services and supports for families. These include investments in home visiting, initiatives to combat food insecurity, investments in community-based organizations, and efforts to address inequitable access to services.
- Council member and Chief Strategy Officer at the Child Care Resource Center (CCRC), Donna Sneeringer, presented an overview of the work the CCRC is conducting in partnership with the CHHSA and the California Department of Education (CDE) through the Preschool Development Renewal (PDG-R) grant. This work includes conducting parent and early childhood provider cafes, conducting virtual parent feedback sessions, and strengthening regional Resource and Referral (R&R) coordination. Sneeringer also shared parent feedback on equity and the importance of finding culturally responsive child care, opportunities to support parent advocacy, and providing anti-bias training.
- The final segment of this agenda item was led by Parent Committee members Mary Ignatius, Cherie Schroeder, and Lissette Frausto who shared need, insights, and perspectives from the lens of families.

A high-level, thematic summary of Council discussion and public comments received during the meeting can be found in the following pages.



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### **Summary of Comments and Questions by ECPC Council Members and the Public**

The following sections provide a high-level overview of themes from the June 9, 2021 Early Childhood Policy Council (ECPC) meeting.

The ECPC is an advisory body to the Governor, Legislature, and Superintendent of Public Instruction on statewide early learning, care, and child development. It will provide recommendations on (1) all aspects of the state’s early childhood system, including equity—with consideration for demographic, geographic, and economic diversity—focusing on family-centered, two-generation approaches; (2) opportunities to incorporate a support model of accountability—as opposed to a compliance model of accountability—into the state’s early childhood education system; and (3) ways that the State’s Master Plan for Early Learning and Care and the 2019 California Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education’s (ECE) Final Report can be updated and improved.

The following sections provide a high-level overview council discussions and public comments pertaining to each agenda item.

### **State Budget Update**

Several council members posed questions to the presenters about different aspects of the state budget.

- There was a question about identifying one-time vs. ongoing funds. Chair Johnson shared that this depends on the specific fund, and that most investments covered are part of the \$100 billion CA Comeback Plan. She also shared that some federal guidance is forthcoming including FAQs, allowable uses, etc.
- One council member noted disappointment in the apparent lack of investments in ECE contractors and providers that recognizes the true cost of their work and adjusting rates to be more appropriate. Chair Johnson noted that any changes to rates are within the scope the bargaining process currently underway.
  - Subsequently another member noted that not all providers are aware of the bargaining process and that outreach may help with understanding of this process.



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- Several members highlighted the importance of slots for family daycare providers, in addition to centers, to help shorten or eliminate the current waiting list and eliminate family fee waivers for all families, not just families sheltering in place.
- Several members posed questions regarding universal transitional kindergarten (TK) and whether the presenters could elaborate on family ability to select TK.
- Giannina Perez, Senior Advisor to the Governor, shared that proposed trailer bill language states that all eligible families who receive a subsidy will have the right to determine which program best fits their needs for any child who is four years old. There is additional funding to look at facilities in the LEA space. Giannina offered to continue discussing this issue offline, an offer several council members welcomed.
- Another member noted that the proposals and funding available present a tremendous opportunity and applauded what they represent. This same member elevated the importance of addressing inequities through these proposals as well.
- One member noted concern about whether sufficient investments in behavioral health services are being proposed for the youngest children (infants and toddlers).
- Another member noted an apparent absence of after-school programs from the proposals.

### **Public Comment**

- One person, a daycare provider, noted the importance of having good information about the value of daycare and its impact on subsequent success.
- Another person who worked at Bananas resource and referral and the Child Care Resource and Referral Network, Northern Directors Group, and EveryChild California, noted the history of establishing and adjusting provider rates including the cuts to the regional market rate in 2009 and the subsequent failure to update them; the comment being that rates have been set appropriately in the recent past and can be again.
- Another person, a CCPU member, noted the view that the rate proposal to go to the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile of the 2018 regional market rate is not extreme and that it is a racial justice issue.

## **Child Care Program Transition Quarterly Report**

Comments were raised regarding the transition's impact on child care reimbursements.

- Dr. Jaime-Mileham reaffirmed that a smooth transition is a priority, that contracts have gone out to contractors, that many are returning to CDSS, and they are on target.



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- One council member asked: “Will CDSS be doing a Regional Market Rate (RMR) survey, and if so when?”
  - Dr. Jaime-Mileham explained that CDE requested a waiver for the RMR during the pandemic, but they have moved forward with the selection of a contractor (American Institutes for Research) and CDSS is working with CDE with respect to the release of the survey and a more specific timeline.
- One council member made a comment that not many providers are aware of the RMR survey and are hesitant to give their rates over the phone. The member suggested that a letter be sent to all family daycare providers to make sure they are aware.
  - Several members raised the issue of market instability in rates due to the pandemic and questioned whether this would impact survey accuracy or if timing should be delayed to let the market stabilize.
  - One council member shared with the council that a white paper about the RMR survey was developed by the Rates Reform Committee that addressed the true cost of early education that is paying a professional wage. The member expressed a hope that the suggestions in the white paper could be made reality.
- Another council member asked “Are the first round apportionments coming from CDE? What is the timeline for the apportionments? What is timeline for transitioning to direct deposit?”
  - Dr. Jaime-Mileham shared that the transition to direct deposit is a May revise proposal and would take effect in January 2022. She also shared that CDSS would be using the apportionment schedule as CDE has in the past.

## **What Families Need Now**

Council members responded positively to the data and parent perspectives shared during this agenda item. Specific comments from council members about information presented during this segment are described below.

- One member highlighted the mental pressure on childcare providers and the risks they took on to provide services during the pandemic. She commented that it is important to include providers in supports for behavioral health.
  - Several other members underscored the comment about supporting the mental health of providers.
- One member elevated family childcare providers in particular and the need for them to be supported at all levels.
- Another member spoke to the experience of being a Black parent in the black community and the resulting focus on the safety of his children. In particular, the



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inability for younger children to be vaccinated combined with the higher prevalence of COVID in his community is a unique threat to safety. Given this, the member raised applying an equity lens to ensuring young children are vaccinated.

- One council member elevated the importance of paying child care providers a living wage given their role as most trusted and integral part of the community.
  - This point was echoed by another member who pointed out that without an appropriate wage providers may not feel the risks to health are worth it.

### **Public Comment**

A member of the public commented that disaster and crises are likely to continue and so it is worth investing in being better prepared for the types of issues that we can expect to encounter, like disseminating PPE for example. “Can some rules be set up to help keep everyone working efficiently and systematically (and quickly)?”