



Workforce Advisory Committee Meeting Summary: November 9, 2021

Attendees: Amelia Soto, AnnLouise Bonnitto, Debra Ward, Miren Algorri, Tonia McMillian, Virginia Eigen, Zoila Toma

1. Welcome and Introductions (Chair Tonia McMillian)

In her opening remarks, Early Childhood Policy Council (ECPC) Workforce Advisory Committee Chair, Tonia McMillian, welcomed the Committee and members of the public to the second meeting of the year. She thanked the Committee and the public for their commitment to attending and serving. Chair McMillian presented an overview of the meeting, which focused on learning about the role of child care unions and how they can support California's early childhood workforce. The meeting centered around a panel of national, state, and local experts who each delivered presentations on child care unionization, their benefits, and how they can be used to support the early childhood workforce.

2. Early Care and Education Workforce Discussion: National, State, and Local Perspectives

- Cathy Sarri, Michelle Sforza, and child care provider Patti Bailey delivered a joint presentation that described the challenges and needs plaguing the early childhood workforce across the country. They provided examples of how unionization has supported systemic changes to advance subsidy rate reform, healthcare, and food program expansion.
- The next set of panelists, Donise Keller and Alexa Frankenburg, presented state-level perspectives on the opportunities and impacts of unionization. They provided examples of how California's Child Care Providers United (CCPU) helped negotiate financial relief for providers during the pandemic, including stipends and waived family fees.
- The final presentation elevated the experiences of Nancy Wyatt and Oscar Tang—two family child care providers serving infants and toddlers. It outlined the challenges they face and offered solutions to better support California's family child care providers.

A high-level, thematic summary of Committee 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 Workforce Advisory Committee Members and the Public

The following sections provide a high-level overview of themes from the November 9 2021 ECPC Workforce Advisory Committee 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 focus of this meeting was on considering the early care and education workforce from national, state, and local perspectives. The meeting included input from several guest speakers and covered a range of topics:

- Service Employees International Union (SEIU) International and Seattle, WA: Cathy Sarri, Michelle Sforza, and Patti Bailey
 - Motivation to unionize
 - Key accomplishments, including wages/reimbursement rates, investments in training, and access to healthcare
 - A local perspective from Seattle, WA
- CCPU and Contra Costa County: Donise Keller and Alexa Frankenberg
 - A local perspective from Contra Costa County
 - An overview of CCPU
- California Child Care Network: Nancy Wyatt and Oscar Tang
 - An overview of the California Child Care Network
 - Potential solutions

The meeting also included a period of public comment reacting to the guest speaker presentations and Q&As:

- No questions were asked, but many underscored the challenges for family child care providers associated with universal pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) and the expansion of transitional kindergarten (TK).



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The following sections provide a high-level overview of these major themes.

SEIU International and Seattle, WA: Cathy Sarri, Michelle Sforza, and Patti Bailey

Motivations to Unionize

- The organization of unions for family child care providers was initially motivated by low wages, sometimes as low as \$3.00–\$5.00 an hour.
- Another motivating factor was the lack of affordable health care for these providers. This gap in access was evident during COVID-19-19, when many providers closed simply because they were sick and could not get care for themselves.
- Additionally, family child care providers were often not considered or engaged in state policy conversations, also motivating unionization.
- Finally, a lack of access to affordable training—especially in combination with low wages—contributed to the motivation to unionize.
- As part of the presentation, 20 states were identified as having advanced bargaining for family child care providers.

Key Accomplishments

- The work began by considering the distinct role of family child care providers: they often serve essential and shift workers during nontraditional hours; and providers are predominately women of color—serving communities of color—and they play an important role in these communities.
- Also discussed were the unique challenges providers faced, such as burdensome state regulations and costly barriers to entry that push them out of the market and can create child care deserts.

Providers Wages and Reimbursement/Subsidy Rates

- Family child care unions have focused on shifting wages to get closer to the market rate. This also includes giving providers a voice in the debate on reimbursement/subsidy rates and advocating for the inclusion of differentials for late-night hours. Another area of advocacy was in access to food programs to children.
- Unions have also supported the creation of cooperative structures and peer networks to support providers to navigate the complex regulatory structure. This includes helping to mediate conflicts and compliance issues between states and providers and supports keeping more providers open and available to families.



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Investments in Training

- Another area of focus for family child care unions was provider training and improving access to affordable training. Improvements in this area were made by securing funding for apprenticeship and certificate programs and career ladder supports.
- One area where access to required training is particularly an issue is in universal Pre-K programs. An example of progress in this space in Pennsylvania was cited. In that case, unions advocated for family providers to be included in their universal Pre-K program, opening up options for families.

Access to Healthcare

- Finally, unions for family child care providers have advocated for increases in access to health care, including through the creation of health care funds that employers can contribute to.
- This work predates the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and has since integrated with the ACA to expand care beyond fundamental coverage.

A Local Perspective from Seattle, WA

- Patti shared her experiences as a member of SEIU 925 and as president of her local CCPU chapter.
- Specifically, this included efforts in her community to secure support for members to pay for health care costs when they (inevitably) catch something from the children in their care. Her union also worked to secure professional development support to increase training opportunities and language offerings.
- She also worked to secure increased rates to attract more providers to the field and started a program to provide substitute providers when necessary.

CCPU and Contra Costa County: Donise Keller and Alexa Frankenberg

A local perspective from Contra Costa County

- Donise shared her experiences as a part of the brand-new local CCPU chapter in Contra Costa County.
- Specifically, she shared the role the new union played in keeping providers' doors open during the pandemic, including through negotiated stipends to providers, paid COVID-19 closure days, and pay based on enrollment versus attendance.



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An Overview of CCPU

- Alexa, as CCPU executive director, provided an overview of CCPU. This included its local and statewide structure as a vehicle through which 40,000 child care providers and three local unions (SEIU Local 521, United Domestic Workers of America (UDW)/AFSCME Local 3930 [The Home Care Providers Union], and SEOU Local 99) come together to advocate.
- She shared that the union started nearly 20 years ago when union members working nontraditional hours sought support to secure child care that was accessible to them. In addition, family child care providers saw home-based healthcare workers unionize and were motivated to action.
- She shared many of the specific issues that a union can address, including support in navigating the complex system in which family child care providers work and the common lack of coverage and benefits such as healthcare, workers comp, retirement, or even being covered by minimum wage laws (meaning there is no floor on wages).
- Advocating for subsidy rates to keep up with the costs of providing child care is a key part of the work of their union. Specifically, their goals are to
 - make family child care a good middle-class job through wages and access to training, healthcare and other benefits;
 - build a mixed-delivery model that makes child care accessible to everyone, regardless of race, income, zip code, etc.; and
 - establish a dedicated funding stream that fully supports the workforce.
- In the midst of COVID-19, several priorities were tackled, including increasing stipends, additional nonoperational days, establishing a working group to discuss use of COVID-19 relief dollars, and other issues (e.g., waiving of family fees and payment based on enrollment versus attendance).
- The first CCPU comprehensive contract was ratified in July. This included increases in pay, improvements payment is made, meetings with states to find solutions to a variety of issues, and improvements to the grievance process.

California Child Care Network: Nancy Wyatt and Oscar Tang

An overview of the California Child Care Network (Network)

- Nancy shared an overview of the Network, including that it is an all-volunteer organization of family child care providers.
- Part of their work is in advocating for legislation, such as California Senate Bill (SB) 234 which focused on getting rid of local discrimination by cities, counties, and landlords regarding how family child care is set up and in terms of associated fees.



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- Other activities include disseminating information to providers such as safe sleep handouts, etc. Some of this is accomplished through the Network's Facebook pages and their website; this includes a focus on translation of resources. The Network focused on making every resource available in multiple languages.
- Another area of work is in addressing the shortage of infant care, not just through increasing slots but also getting family child care providers a seat at the table when new resources are made available, such as with Prop C in San Francisco and the Child Care Local Planning Council. In that case, part of the challenge was that most meetings were during the day when many providers are not available.
- The work of the Network helped to illuminate that in some cases, a new slot is not as effective as filling an existing slot in a neighborhood with a large amount of vacancies.
- Part of their approach focuses on ensuring that a foundation of fair and sufficient compensation is in place, so that caregivers can focus on their critical role in the lives of the children in their care. This is especially important for infant/toddler care because it is more expansive and complex to care for such young children.
- Some of that complexity comes from regulations such as the current safe sleep regulations in California. This requires checking on a sleeping child every 15 minutes, which is positive for safety, but can create challenges given that children have different sleep schedules.
- Also given that these children cannot wear masks or be vaccinated, creating an environment that is safe with respect to COVID-19 is also a more significant challenge.
- Finally, the expansion of TK poses a challenge for family child care since enrolling preschool-aged children help to make infant/toddler care more sustainable for these providers. Family child care providers may not be able to compete with TK, and a result might lose preschool-aged kids and have to close.

Potential Solutions

- One of the solutions discussed to keep family child care providers open is the support of a mixed-delivery system that gives parents a choice in the type of provider for their child. This includes improving compensation and benefits for these providers.
- Part of the solutions discussed was a reexamination of whether more slots is the best option when compensation and benefits are insufficient. Instead, the focus should be on understanding why existing slots are staying vacant or why providers are failing to fill new slots and going under.
- Another solution discussed was supporting translation/language services to increase access.



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Public Comment/Question and Answer Session

- Multiple individuals underscored the unfortunate way that universal Pre-K and the expansion of TK can detrimentally impact providers of infant/toddler care, especially in family child care settings.
- Another person noted that this issue particularly affects the families who are economically disadvantaged, despite working a full-time job.
- Another person commented that even for preschool-aged children, the universal Pre-K or TK options may not be the best fit, so parental choice is critical even in this age group.