



**Early Childhood Policy Council
Parent and Workforce Advisory Committees**

Agenda and Transcript

Virtual Meeting

Thursday, October 17, 2024
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Physical Meeting

1000 G Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
WestEd, 5th floor, Capitol Room

Agenda

1. Introduction

- Welcome
- Review of agenda

2. Listening session: What is on your minds as parents of young children and as early childhood education providers? What solutions could help?

- Discussion
- Public comment

3. Adjourn

Attendance:

Parent Advisory Committee Members:

Cheryl (Cherie) Shroeder, Deborah Corley-Marzett, Lissete Frausto, Mary Ignatius, Patricia Lozano, Patrick MacFarlane, Yenni Rivera.

Workforce Advisory Committee:

AnnLouise Bonnitto, Debra Ward, Miren Algorri, Patricia Alexander, Tonia McMillian, Zoila Toma.

ECPC Council Members:

Lupe Jaime-Mileham.

Public Comment:

Ghada Ponce, Keisha Nzewi, Maeva Marc, Marcella Graves, Norma Mendez, Rebecca Grasty, Sarina Lynn, Tessie Ragan, Tracy Tran, Yolanda Thomas.

Hosts:

Diana Yactayo, Jateri Willis, Karin Bloomer, Ramee Serwanga, Véronique Baumbach. Evon Morgan (SP), Sarah Sun (CN), Ya-Nan Chou (CN), Yelka Vargas (SP).

Meeting Transcript:

Karin Bloomer:

I'll now turn things over to our interpreters to describe how you can listen to this meeting in English, Spanish, or Mandarin.

Spanish Interpreter:

Good morning. To use the interpretation feature, please scroll to the bottom of the Zoom screen where the meeting controls are. Click on the interpretation icon, the world, and select English as your language. If you are joining through the Zoom mobile app, cell phone, tablet, et cetera, please press the ellipsis, the three consecutive dots, then interpretation, and then choose your language. Finally, click on mute original audio to not hear the original Spanish low in the background. [Spanish language]

Mandarin Interpreter:

[Mandarin language] Thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you. So now we'll enable the language channels and please select your language of choice at this time. And I'll make one more note. Just as a reminder, with the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act rules that were recently updated in this last year it requires members of the body that's meeting, so in this case, the two advisory committees, members of those committees to please have your cameras on during the full duration of the meeting unless you're having technological difficulties doing so. And with that, I'll turn it over to one of our chairs, the chair of the Workforce Advisory Committee, Tonia McMillan.

Tonia McMillian:

Thank you, Karin. Hello and welcome everyone. I am Tonia McMillan, Chair of the Early Childhood Policy Council's Workforce Advisory Committee. I am joined by my colleague, Mary Ignatius, chair of the Early Childhood Policy, Council's Parent Advisory Council. I want to thank members of both advisory committees for being here today. I also want to acknowledge members of the council who are attending, and for the many members of the public who are here, we thank you. We will be keeping the chat feature open for the duration of the meeting. Karin mentioned that earlier so that members of the public can comment as we go. And at the end of the meeting, we will devote some time to verbal public comment. Mary?

Mary Ignatius:

Thank you, Co-Chair Ms. McMillan. Good morning everyone. Today we want to spend our time hearing from you members of our advisory committees and really what's on your mind right now as parents of young children and as early education providers. And then we're going to open up the discussion to invite ideas for solutions to the challenges that you share at the next council meeting, which is November 19th, Tonia and I will share out the themes from this discussion with our fellow council members. So this is how we're going to approach today. We are going to start with the members of the Parent Advisory Committee. I'm going to call on each of those members and invite them to share what's most on your mind as a parent in the early childhood space. We have our committee members represent families who are immigrant families, Black families, families in the foster care system, families who are survivors of DV, families who have children with special needs. You have very unique experiences that we really want to hear what's on your mind right now.

And then after we go through our Parent Advisory Committee, we'll invite members of the Workforce Advisory Committee to share what is going on in your lives right now that's really keeping you up at night that you want to make sure all of us hear and know. So we're going to ask each committee member to keep their initial sharing to know more than two minutes, which I know feels like not a lot of time, but you can really get something really good in two minutes. And in those two minutes, giving us a brief description of what is weighing on your mind, what challenges you're experiencing in this space. And if you need more than two minutes, that's why chat is there, and you can share more of whatever you've got on your mind in the chat. And then once we move through all of our members, we'll open it up to more exploration of the challenges you raise and explore together possible solutions. At this point, are there any questions from advisory committee members before we start? Do you see any raised hands?

Tonia McMillan:

No. Seeing none.

Mary Ignatius:

Okay. So, we are going to begin. Again, the prompt, the question is... I just lost it. What is on your minds as parents of young children and as early childhood education providers? So let's begin. Again, we'll start with the Parent Advisory Committee. If you

can either go off mute or raise your hand, and I'll make sure to get each of you who are on the committee and who are here today, your two minutes to shine.

Karin Bloomer:

And Mary, sorry, this is Karin Bloomer. Would it help if I just sort of went through names from the Parent Advisory Committee to invite them to speak?

Mary Ignatius:

I can do it. I have the list here. We have Lissete, Patrick, Ms. Deborah, Patricia, Cherie. Do we see Naima or Yenny? And Patrick.

Karin Bloomer:

Patrick is here. I don't see Naima or Yenny yet, but we'll keep our eyes out.

Mary Ignatius:

Okay. Oh, and actually Naima cannot attend due to a doctor's appointment, so great. Okay. Lissete has her hand up. Do you want to go, Lissete? And is somebody keeping time? Am I supposed to be doing that?

Karin Bloomer:

I'd be happy to keep time and just gently let folks know when you've hit two minutes.

Mary Ignatius:

Okay. Hi, Lissete.

Lissete Frausto:

Thank you. Good morning everyone. I guess I'll go first. Wow, that's a question that I have so many things. As a parent, you have so many things on your mind. Not only regards to early child care, but also if you have older children like me, I have a 10-year-old and an eight-year-old. But particularly for early child care, I'm still having a hard... I was able to find a child care for my 19-month-old a couple months ago. But unfortunately, she was let go from the child care provider because she was hitting and biting. And although I was expressing to the provider that this is developmentally appropriate and that we can work together and try to find a solution, she was like, "I can't have this in my daycare." And I just thought, "Okay, that's fine. I'll just find something else. Maybe this was just not the correct space for her."

And after having my older kids in Kidango, it has been a tough and challenging journey trying to find child care for her. At the moment, I'm having to pay out of pocket for a family member to help me with her, which a big chunk of my paycheck is going to just child care. I did try to apply for the CAPP program so that my family member can be a provider. And I am just so discouraged because they are telling me that because she is a great aunt, because she's dad's aunt, then she has to go through a different process that's going to take up to between eight weeks to six months. And I said, "Well, I already know who she is. She's a family member." But because of their guidelines or what's

happening, then that's what has to be done. So I was very discouraged. So that's why I've been paying out of my own pocket because, don't get me wrong, she is in a loving and caring space.

But I do also know that she needs a space where she can develop her social and emotional skills with other children, especially with the biting, because she's still biting. And I'm trying to wind her off on that, but it's just so hard. I live in Stanislaus County. I'm also advocating to make sure that we have more access for our families here because we have a limit of access to child care in our area. To be exact, I went to a town hall on, what's today, Thursday, on Tuesday. And US Congressman John Duarte and Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil were there. And my question to them was, "What will you do to ensure that children and families have access to child care?" I particularly brought up the issue in regard to Early Head Start and Head Start, that many of our families, including myself, we are not qualifying for it because we make too much money when they're not taking into consideration what's coming in from our pre-checks. I'm sorry.

Karin Bloomer:

Sorry. Sorry to interrupt. If you could wrap up.

Lisete Frausto:

Okay. Yes. So this would be the last part. Just making sure that we could be able to bring more awareness to Early Head Start, Head Start and seeing what can be done to change it from being federal income guidelines to state income guidelines, because we know that it's different being federal and living in California. So just making it more accessible so that more families can take advantage of this particular child care space. And also having a better system. I've been, like I said, I did the CAPP program and if I have Medi-Cal, I have to verify, bring them a verification letter. So there's always this thing that comes up of having just a portal where our parents can just be like, "Okay, I have these in these services," and they just pull up their information and there's everything that they may need for a parent. For me, I'm able to kind of work around my schedule and go to many meetings, but not every parent has the same accessibility and opportunity. So just making it easier for parents to navigate the system.

Mary Ignatius:

Thank you, Lisete, that was really incredible. You've got in issues around Trust Line issues around income guidelines being too low, a verification portal, which we wholeheartedly agree with. And I know you have other things on your mind. Please use the chat to share everything. And the chat function is open through the duration of the meeting because we want to make sure the public also has their chance to weigh in. Council Member Patrick MacFarlane, would you like to go next?

Patrick MacFarlane:

Sure, I'll go. And Mary, I love this prompt. So I was thinking I really couldn't think of anything that first came to mind. And I looked at my desk and I saw my ballot that I filled out, and that immediately came to mind is something that's been on my mind a lot, which is the election, what the outcome of the election might mean for myself, for my

family, for communities. And so I figured it would be valuable for me to take my two minutes or even less to just encourage everyone to fill out your ballot, get it in, share with the friend or a neighbor who maybe isn't sure if they're going to vote. I would tell folks who I'm going to vote for and encourage them to do the same, but I understand that this might not be the appropriate forum to do so, but I would just encourage everyone to get involved to vote and to encourage a friend or neighbor to vote. This is such an important election, and that's what's on my mind. Thanks, Mary.

Mary Ignatius:

That's very important. And even though I'm from San Francisco, I'm going to say go Dodgers, but that's very painful for me to say. But thank you. Everybody should have received a ballot in the mail. It's supposed to make it a lot easier for you to be able to vote, and we really want everybody's voice heard. So thank you, Patrick, for lifting that up. Patricia, yeah?

Patricia Lozano:

I was trying to find raise hand and I couldn't. Good morning. And yes, go Dodgers. And for me, what's on my mind after I heard Lisette and Patrick is how can I be a better listener to really connect what's happening on the ground to policy. So there's so much need out there, and my job is to do that, to be... I'm a parent too, but also it's to be close to the ground and really translate what parent needs and make it happen at the policy level. So I'm glad I'm here and I just want to be a better listener and a better communicator, and also empower parents to use their voice through voting, through what Lisette is doing to going to town halls. And really we need those voices out there. So that's on my mind today.

Mary Ignatius:

Thank you, Patricia. There are many ways that parents can have their voices heard, so use all of them as you can. Cherie, do you want to go?

Cherie Schroeder:

Hi, this is Cherie Schroeder and I... I thought I was cutting out. So I really am here on behalf in some ways of child welfare and the voices of California's resource families. And I think it's not been something really a thought. I'm along with you. Kudos to people. Please go out and vote because a non-vote is a vote, and I'm really... That's probably been one of the top five things on my mind, and I've lost a little sleep over it. So I'm very anxious about all of that. But I also been volunteering my time here lately to do foster care recruitment for Yolo County. There is a preference to place with relatives that doesn't negate the fact that we still need families desperately on short-term basis as maybe a relative is getting ready or maybe there isn't a relative within the area. And we're trying to maintain school of origin, even if it's a little person that's in daycare or going to a preschool program or pre-K. We want to keep that school of origin. So we need local families for local kids.

I know I'm still a resource parent. I'm taking mostly the older teens that hardly anybody will say yes to. But nevertheless, I think that it's so imperative that we think about our

children. They're still being harmed and heard in their own families, and we need really high quality people. And a lot of times it's daycare providers, which are many of you. So please consider opening your heart and your home and knowing there are a lot of changes around mandated reporting right now that's happening, perhaps we'll have a program on that down the road. But right now, I just really encourage you to be thoughtful. Could you be a resource parent? And it's not just the teenagers, but children come in straight from the hospital and there's highest population are those zero to five-year-olds. So please give a consideration. And they really... We know that the first month, second, third, fourth, fifth months are the most important ones of a person's life. So we really do need you there to help do that as well. And thank you to all of the daycare providers and people that take care of our little people. Appreciate it.

Mary Ignatius:

Thank you so much, and it's so important. Ms. Deborah, are you ready?

Deborah Corley-Marzett:

Oh, yes, I'm here. Good morning everyone. There's always something on my mind, there's no doubt about that, but I'm just going to start with this. First of all, what's on my mind? Right now's going to happen. What's going to happen after July 1st for providers with rate reform, providers don't see the state really as being proactive in supporting providers where they need it most. And that's rate reform and getting providers to the true cost of care and finalizing this process and implementing it by July 1st, 2025. Dragging out the true cost of care to a date that the state thinks it should be does nothing for providers. Providers are falling short and teetering on poverty. And providers cannot hold back their concerns about rate reform, because it's their lives. And here we have an opportunity to correct this wrong much sooner than later.

And then what's also on my mind as a provider, and as well as for my parents here, and I'm going to mention it, is the pathway as far as UPK is concerned. CDE mentioned a pathway for providers in the UPK program. And the reason why I'm still on this UPK and this pathway is because providers and parents are entitled to hear a clear vision of what CDE is planning. Providers and parents want to know exactly how CDE plan to use providers in the UPK program. How will a parent, whose child is eligible for UPK program, how will that parent be connected to a family child care network provider who's a part of that program? And how will CDE make sure a parent's choice is not violated when a parent wants to choose a family child care network provider for the UPK for their child over all the different options that are there.

CDE has said providers and networks are part of UPK, but we have yet to hear how, and maybe I missed that meeting, maybe I didn't hear it, but CDE has to lay out the plan and how family child care network providers will fit in the UPK program. Food for thought. Are network providers going to work with school districts? And if so, how? Also, if the school district has an overflow of eligible UPK children, will the school district contact the parent with the list of network providers in the UPK program? Providers and parents know what's coming. But this mysterious one-sided ever-growing with curiosity black hole the state has created with this. UPK is bringing a feeling of uncertainty to those who will be directly affected by this program. And I would like CDE to answer

those questions for providers because this is our livelihood and providers and parents want to know clearly the picture and how do everyone fit in fits in and how it's going to work. Thank you.

Mary Ignatius:

Thank you. That is a lot. And I know for all of the folks impacted by rate reform, it is what you eat, sleep, drink, breathe every day. And we as a committee of parents also are in this fight with you and want true cost of care for you. And so yeah, I just want to say we are with you on that. I believe those are the only members left on our committee except besides myself. I was trying to see if Naima or Yenny wanted to send me a message and share, but if they do, I'll put it in the chat. The only thing I would add from my perspective, I think a little bit goes off of what Lissete was describing around the process for applying and the constant need for verification of documents and how difficult and challenging it is to find that one birth certificate for that one child.

And you think you have all of them in one place, but there's just that one missing and how that can upend the enrollment process. And we saw that happen to one of our members who was missing one birth certificate and thought that she had made it in time and then was told she didn't make this kind of artificial deadline and then had to start the process over again. And that just seems mind-boggling to me. If your children are already part of some other service like food stamps or Medi-Cal or something, at some point they went through a birth certificate verification process like why are we doing it again? And so Lissete's idea of a portal where all systems that require a need to know this information in order to get services should be able to just pull it up and see it and not have to ask the parents over and over and over and over and over and over again for the same documentation.

And I've heard people say, "Well parent, we need to protect confidentiality." I think if you ask any parent if it's protecting confidentiality or getting child care services or food security or housing, they would say, "Please use that document to get me the services." The other thing, we had another member who told us that she had to apply for her child care services six different times in order to enroll. That is ridiculous. At least for the parents who are part of parent voices, they can come to a community of people who are going to encourage them and encourage them to exercise their rights and to not give up. But for those parents who aren't connected to a community-based organization, those are who I really feel for because they're throwing up their hands probably at the first, second or third time.

And their children are missing out on access to early learning that they are entitled to. And I think that's really deeply disheartening and we need to make it as simple and easy as possible. And I did get a message from Naima, if I may just share. "We want healthy snacks and food for children zero to five. We want to educate parents about the value of observing their children and detecting any signs of disability and reporting it to teachers and educators. Some parents do not want to admit that their children are suffering from a disability that keeps them from functioning. But if parents and providers can really work together, then we can get children what we need." Is that... I think that's everyone from the Parent Advisory Committee that we moved to the workforce committee and then we can circle back and talk about solutions.

Tonia McMillian:

Got it. Thank you, Mary. Man, I'm just writing notes here. So I am so glad that we are doing this because we really need to hear what is going on from the folks who are actually out there doing the work, who are touching and speaking to, and listening to the workforce, to the parents. So thank you Parent Advisory Committee for sharing what's keeping you up at night. So now we're going to move on to hear from the members of the Workforce Advisory Committee. So when I call your name, please briefly share, in two minutes or less, what is on your mind as a provider. And see, let's start with Anne-Louise, are you ready?

AnnLouise Bonnitto:

I am ready. So on the administrative part, what keeps me up at night now is the election. Every administration has different ideas of what they're going to do with early education and child care. And half the time it's not the most beneficial. They're asking more of us with less funding. Right now, on several other work groups I sit on, we've been discussing the points that we've found through Project 2025 that if they were to come true, they're looking at banning Department of Education impacting child care Head Start. To the point that, if I remember the quote that I heard yesterday that the idea is to get rid of child care settings because the children should be with their parents in a traditional setting.

There's a lot to unpack there, but I'm already worried about how we're going to do everything that we're required to do while providing high quality child care that's affordable, accessible. I agree with some of the points that have actually already been brought by the parents. The Trust Line there is way too long of a period to get providers on. We have parents that need to have child care immediately, they'll lose a job, maybe they're losing the opportunity to go back to school. So these are some of the things that I see both on administrating a program, but also what I hear from parents and what we suffer too, because as an agency, how do I look at someone and tell them, "Sure, please apply.

"We have funding, but right now we can't get you on because we haven't received results for the provider that you've chosen that is not within the state licensee, but you want to go through family friends." So for me, I'm holding my breath because I don't know, again, what they're going to ask, how it's going to impact. Are we going to lose slots? Are we going to get reduction in funding? I don't know, because I know that they're asking us to do more for both our employees and for the parents, but with no additional funds. And in the tribal communities, because we have to all compete for two percent of the entire amount of funding that goes out to all the states. So at that point we can't, if we have 240 kids, for example, from a tribe that are eligible, we could only serve maybe ten because of the funding formula and no extra funding coming in because we don't get that. So for me, that keeps me up at night. Thank you.

Tonia McMillian:

Thank you. Anne-Louise. Man. Thank you. Debra? Ms. Debra Ward, are you ready?

Debra Ward:

Hello, yes. Okay so, oh boy, challenges and issues of parents. So as a community of parents, I believe that the challenges and issues widely vary, and of course we are hearing those today. My children are now grown, and they are now growing their own family, but the challenges that I faced 43 years ago as a parent are the same that my two children are facing with their children today. And these include the struggle to find high quality, affordable infant, toddler, and preschool child care.

Also, the delicate balance of juggling their work and family responsibilities and the financial pressures of providing for their growing family. An issue I did not have to face was raising my children in a digital age. So, the growing popularity of digital devices and social media has created new challenges for parents.

For instance, parents that I know have school-aged children, their school-aged children become very digitally-savvy, and most of these parents often find it challenging to monitor their online activities and ensure their safety.

And lastly, for parents, I think the most significant challenge that I often hear about is managing the household budget effectively. So, the current inflation rate, the rising cost of living and increasing housing, healthcare, child care, and early education expenses often strain many of these families financially.

As far as the ECE providers, it's multifaceted. As a former provider, one primary challenge was ensuring that the educational environment was safe, nurturing and conducive to learning for young children, all children. This involved adhering to the strict health and safety regulations, managing diverse learning needs, and creating inclusive spaces for all of the children that we served.

Another significant challenge that I had was retaining qualified and dedicated staff. So, early childhood educators play a crucial role in shaping the lives of children, and retaining skilled professionals is essential for maintaining high quality educational programs. The recruitment, the training, competitive wages and professional development were the key, but often, unaffordable.

I think the financial stability is, also, a pressing issue for providers today. Balancing the cost of maintaining the facilities, providing materials and resources, and offering competitive wages for staff while keeping tuition affordable for families, it has been a struggle for many of us.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you, Debra.

Tonia McMillian:

Thank you, Debra.

Okay. I see my beautiful friend, Miren. Oh, what did she... Oh, there she is. Okay.

Miren Algorri:

Hi, Tonia. Sorry. I just joined. Today is a California big ShakeOut, and so, we were busy with that. I was just listening to Debra as she was sharing the challenges as parents.

The challenge that I faced as a parent, my daughters are now grown, was the same issue that I'm facing today as a family child care provider and is the cost of care and never been reimbursed for the services that I have rendered throughout my 27 years as a licensed family child care provider.

That made it very difficult to provide for my daughters. And just to give you a little bit of background, I was my mother's assistant in her family child care before I became a licensed provider myself. And I could not stay as her assistant, because I needed to provide for my daughter. And so, not only my mother lost-

Karin Bloomer:

Miren, you've gone mute.

Tonia McMillian:

Yeah. I'm going to have to... Miren, you're muted.

Karin Bloomer:

No. On Zoom, she's not. We've her your audio. Can you say something again?

Miren Algorri:

Can you hear me?

Tonia McMillian:

Yes. Yeah.

Miren Algorri:

Sorry about that. As I was sharing, the challenges that I faced in the past as a single parent raising both of my daughters were the same issue that my mother faced as she was trying to provide for my siblings, and it's the inadequate payment for the services that we render. These has an impact on the workforce, and of course, it has an impact on parents, just like Debra explained, finding quality, affordable, readily accessible child care services.

So, these issue of the workforce subsidized in the subsidy system has an impact on the community, and it has an impact on the physical and mental health of the workforce, and it has an impact on the outcomes for children. So, as a part of the workforce, as a professional, and as a parent, the struggles and the challenges have always gone hand in hand. I see parents struggling to find child care services, especially as it was just mentioned, for infants and toddlers.

I live in a child care desert, and as much as we want to continue to serve and we have and we are serving the community, it is these inequity on the payment system that continue to hinders children, families, and the workforce.

We really need to move into this new alternative payment methodology and be paid for the true cost of the services that we're rendering, because we see that our workforce is dwindling, and that young people are not enticed to become educators as much as they

love working with children. Because we cannot provide for ourselves, and we cannot provide for our children if we are not paid the true cost of the services that we're rendering.

This is a disservice. And again, it's been the same challenge that I faced as a daughter of a family child care provider 30 years ago, the same challenge when I became a young parent 27 years ago. The same challenge that I face today. And I'm able to keep my doors open, because I remarried, and my husband takes care of a lot of the bills that should be footed by the child care services that I render.

I know it's redundant, and I know we talk about these time and time, but as long as we don't fix this issue, parents in the workforce will continue to face the same challenges, because this is a shared challenge. What's hindering the workforce is hindering the families. We cannot provide services for all those parents out there.

And, as we know, it's women of color, single mothers of color the ones that are affected the most by this inequitable payment system that forces us, the workforce, to subsidize the subsidy system. Thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you.

Tonia McMillian:

Thank you, Miren. Oh my God. Subsidize the subsidy system. Wow. Yes.

Ms. Patricia Alexander.

Karin Bloomer:

Did we...

Tonia McMillian:

I'll come back to her.

Karin Bloomer:

Okay.

Tonia McMillian:

She's here. Hello, Zoila. Are you ready, sis?

Zoila Toma:

Yes. Thank you. Good morning, everyone. Pleasure to be here. Thank you for giving me the floor to speak.

This is things that we wake up every morning, and when we open our doors, things that are in our heads, in our minds, right? I believe our sister, Debra, Miren, everybody that is here is speaking about the same issues that we all have in our minds when it comes to children with disability.

My daughter's 20 years old, and I had some issues with her that my client's still facing now. She's 21. All this started when she was in preschool. And I'm like, wow, 21 year, two decades later, and we're still facing the same issues. That's one thing that we really, really needs to work.

The second one that come to mind, it's, of course, the rate reform. We still like here fighting, we still don't have any solution. We're always with anxiety what's going to happen next. So, we need that to be emphasized a little bit more.

And the other one is the UPK. We have family educators that are losing, also, their programs because we are not included. Our names come up, but we, still, don't know, how and we cannot wait until last minute to figure it out what is our pathway, what we need to do. We need educators to be ready to see what are the next steps to follow. So, it needs to be a clear, clear vision of how we're going to be included.

Family child care exists because of the need of working families. This, it was the support that we provided to working families decades ago, but now, we are here and we're left behind when changes are happen. Whatever change is happening is because we brought the voice to it.

We said children needs to speak dual language. It's important. We brought it up. We provided it in our programs. But now, the schools are taking credit for all those implementations. And it's like, okay, but we brought it up. It was subjects that we spoke about it, the importance of maintaining their language. And now, it's like, okay.

So, all the issues that we... a family child care educators have brought up, and the importance of early education, children are learning from us how they crawl, how they eat, potty training, all this part of the development of the child, we always saw it as an important, but then, again, we're not taking credit for it.

And I don't want that credit. I just want the acknowledgement that we are essential, that the job that we do is important, that it matters, and that we need to be included. All children learn differently, and if I sit here, I can use the hour just to explain you how three of my children have gone through three different programs of learning.

So, for that, we need to give the parents the option, the children the option to have programs that they can learn and develop. Everybody learns different. I'm an adult, and I learn different. So, we need to have that open mind to help our families to have option for them, and to explain them the process that... We don't want them to see us like...

We are losing children because some of the parents think that we are not educators, that we just sit here and watch their children. We also need to educate them in that area, that we actually have... Some of us, degrees, we have years of experience, we have so much knowledge in the area of early childhood education.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you for that.

Zoila Toma:

So, please, let's open up and talk a little bit more about these issues that still matter. Thank you.

Tonia McMillian:

Thank you, Zoila. You said you don't want the credit, but Zoila, you deserve the credit. Every early educator deserves the credit. Ms. Pat, does she... Is she-

Karin Bloomer:

No. Ms. Pat, I don't know if you needed to step away, but when you're able to come back and put your camera on, you're being invited to share what's on your mind as a provider. So, we'll keep our eyes out for you.

Tonia McMillian:

So, I am going to share what keeps me up at night. And man, I'm piggybacking what most of you guys have shared. And I do want to start with the rate reform and the alternative methodology, because at the end of the day, the providers have done the heavy lifting. They have done the hardest part.

And so, to drag this thing on is sending a message, and it's not a good message. It's not the message that you want the folks who are on the ground doing this work to receive. Which lends itself, also, to the racial wage justice, where we have black early educators making less than their non-black early educators. We have to address that.

A lot of you guys have alluded to how it was in the past, and here we are, decades later, still, dealing with it. And so, I say it's a shame. And, yeah, I know I'm not the only person who, this is on their minds. What keeps me up is the family, friend and neighbor process, and if we address rate reform, then, the family, friend and neighbor subsidy will change. At the end of the day, we all want to make the money that we are due.

And so, streamlining that process for family, friend, and neighbor makes a difference. Our formerly incarcerated parents, it bothers me, it bothers me to the core, that we don't have more supports for them when it comes to child care. Going through the whole reunification process, and now, having to jump through hoops with their child care. I'm very passionate about that, and I've been harping on it for years, and I'm not going to stop. That keeps me up at night.

Retaining, retaining the amazing early educators in this field is important. And having some type of incentive for other folks to come and do this work, it's valuable. But until we have rate reform and until we address the racial wage gaps... People aren't running to do this work. And the economy needs us. The state of California needs us to do this work.

So, those are some of the things that stay in the front of my brain all the time. And so, I really appreciate everyone sharing.

Ms. Pat, she didn't come back yet? No.

Karin Bloomer:

She didn't.

Tonia McMillian:

So, I am going to... Thank you guys for sharing. And I'm going to hand it back over to Mary.

Mary Ignatius:

Wow. And we are so good, we are a minute ahead of our timeline. I guess, I just want to say, I think it's just so important, like we're here as committee members to bring our expertise from the individual vantage points that we all come to.

And so, it was just... So great to just hear from each and every one of you. Some of the themes that came out of it already... People shared those themes. And then, there were, also, just individual items that were very specific. So, just so grateful to each of you for being on this committee and making sure your voices are heard.

I'm going to summarize what we've heard so far from the discussion, and we want to offer some questions that might help us as we move into the next part. Some of the themes that we heard were around parental choice, and making sure parents have the full array of options that they know about.

And then, even within parental choice, there are some barriers such as what Lissete brought up around Trust Line. And I just want to say that, as far as I understand it, grandparents, aunts and uncles are exempt from providing fingerprints. And so, I'm very interested in this nuance around great aunt. Because, technically, this aunt is still Lissete's aunt, and there's nothing in the law that says your aunt has to be the sister of your parents.

So, I'm encouraging Lissete to, please, follow up with the Child Care Law Center and we can, hopefully, resolve that. There was the theme around a portal where information can be shared to minimize the long enrollment processes or losing specific paperwork that we need. There was a theme around voting that was mentioned by several members.

We heard a lot about financial stability, especially when it comes to the financial stability of our early educators, and how much of the child care system is being subsidized on their backs, predominantly, women of color. And that is why we need the true cost of care to really mitigate and rectify the harm that low wages have done to our providers. Which, also, leads into the issues around retaining our early educators. Because if we continue to pay them these abysmal wages, we are losing them. And children need continuity of care. They need stable relationships and attachment. And that's why we need providers to stay in our field.

We heard about the UPK pathway, and being really, really, really clear that the Department of Education needs to explain how family child care providers, and I guess, in this case, family child care provider home education networks, how they are being integrated into this UPK vision, and how school districts will be able to communicate with family child care provider with FCCHENs, and how FCCHENs will be able to communicate with school districts to ensure all children have access.

And I don't know if I am missing any, but we just wanted to name those as some of the themes we've heard. I don't know if anyone else wants to lift up a theme they heard that I might've missed. If there's an issue amongst those themes that you kind of want to dig

in more as a full committee and sort of what solutions come to mind to address some of the things you've heard.

And I guess we will open it back up to the full committee. Racial wage justice came up. Thank you, Joy, for that. So, any other themes we're missing? Any of those themes you want to really dig into, and any solutions that you want to suggest?

Karin Bloomer:

Mary, this is Karin. I also heard a theme around, and forgive me if you already said this, but children with special needs and early identification of disabilities, and how to connect families with early intervention.

Mary Ignatius:

Yes. Thank you so much for reminding me of that.

You all. Now, you all quiet? Go ahead, Ms. Deborah.

Deborah Corley-Marzett:

Well, not to say necessarily quiet but, yet, thinking because it's, really, something that's always on our minds. And some people in the public, let me say that, may think that there's an over usage of rate reform and over usage of always wanting to bring it up. But there's a reason for that.

The reason why we talk about rate reform, the reason why we talk about getting to the true cost of care, the reason why we're talking about we needed and wanted implemented by July 21st, 2025, because it is important to providers and their survival. Sitting back in your homes, and literally, thinking about what is going to happen if that deadline's not met. I need to be able to make my ends, not necessarily meet, but overlap.

So, this is something important, Mary, that needs to be discussed in the public openly and fix, and just complete it. Let's just put the icing on the cake and the cherry and move on. Let's get this done for California providers. Tonia brought up systemic racism. Now, we've been dealing with this in this RMR since the beginning. Since the beginning. It's time to correct this wrong.

So, let's stop sugarcoating it, bringing it up for discussion in other places, just to sit at the table and talk about it. Let's get this moving. That's why we bring it up, that's why providers talk about it so much. It's their livelihoods. Let's get it moving.

Tonia McMillian:

Thank you, Deborah. All right, thank you.

Mary Ignatius:

This is the year.

Tonia McMillian:

I do want to add something. So, we've got a blue collar, and we've got white collar, and now, there's pink collar jobs. And so, we fall under the category of pink collar jobs.

But along with that pink collar title, it's sexism, is workers being underpaid, workers not being recognized, majority, women, there's a problem. There is a problem with that. And it just drives me crazy, because it's still here.

You can label it, you can put a Band-Aid on it, but at the end of the day, the racism, the sexism exists. You can call it a pink collar because you think that's cute, but it's not. There's nothing cute about not being paid what you're worth.

So, we need to eliminate the harm. The harm cannot continue to carry on. And until we address... There's so many reforms that need to be addressed. And we're not going to do it overnight, we get that, but listen, if Project 2025 happens, we better be banded together and we better be ready. Because if we think the racism and the sexism is here now, it's going to quadruple.

So, hearing what's on everybody's minds right now, and we're so close to November 5th, we need to start planning and figuring out how we're going to be on the offensive. Because we've been on the defense forever. What's on your mind... Let's have a discussion, you guys. We're going to open it up to public comment. The committee members. Let's hear what else, what else...

We have to create a plan. Let's create a plan before November 5th.

Karin Bloomer:

I see Lissete's hand.

Tonia McMillian:

Oh, hi Lissete.

Lissete Frausto:

Hi. Yes. So, coming back again to the access in child care and making it easier for us as parents. You know, I've been getting myself involved more out there and just making sure to let elected officials know, especially with the election coming up, making sure that we have people that are going to be... The right people, for not only children and families and communities, but also, for providers.

I wrote in the chat earlier, many of... All of the time, our teachers are providers, they are so many amazing people out there that go out of their way and are always there with our children, teaching them. Not only teaching them their ABCs or how to write, they are also teaching them how to interact socially, how to express themselves emotionally.

I heard something yesterday... I was a part of... I did it virtually, but it was a breakfast with First 5 in connection with Alameda County early education. They provided a data that said that providers are being paid \$13 an hour. And they said, "Let that sync with you". My mom was also a part of the CAPP program when I was able to have her be a part of it, and just knowing how much she was getting paid, and then, also, thinking to myself, wow, this is also what other providers are getting paid.

And of course, my mom only has my daughter, but other providers have other children, and they have to figure out their meals, they have to figure out how to pay their light bill, how to pay their water bill. And then, I think I just, also, found out that it was vetoed that they're not going to be paid in regard to enrollment, but based in attendance.

So, that is something that's in my mind as well. I mean, I'm a parent, but now, being a part of these committees, I also put on the other hat of providers, and also, making sure to speak out whenever I can in regard to that.

I was part of a focus group two weeks ago here in my community that somebody wanted to hear about access to child care for families. There was a mom there, she was in tears. She goes, "Everywhere I go, they tell me I don't qualify for child care because my husband makes too much money. Because my husband makes too much money, here I am making desserts, pastries to sell to be able to help make ends meet. But I wish there would just be something that, like a grant or something.

For parents that don't qualify for child care, because you make quote-unquote "too much money", then, provide something else, another opportunity for us to be able to have the child care access and have that help.

Many of the times, they feel like they don't have the help, and when you go and ask for help, you're being pushed away. Like me, asking me for all these requirements in order for a family member to be a provider. And then, for me to wait six months to get child care when I need it now, I'm thankful and I'm fortunate that I have the job that I do, but many parents don't have that opportunity.

So, we need to, also, make sure that we make it easier, we make it more accessible, and we are listening to the people that are in the ground, which are our families, our teachers, and our providers.

Tonia McMillian:

Thank you, Lissete. Oh, Ms. Patricia Alexander, you're back.

Oh, Ms. Patricia Alexander. You're back. We're going to give you two minutes to share with us. What's on your mind? What's keeping you up at night?

Patricia Alexander:

Hi, Tonia.

Tonia McMillian:

Hi.

Patricia Alexander:

Well, with me, I've watched a lot of stuff come and go over the years. I've been in business for 54 years, so I've seen a lot of changes, for the most part, a lot of great changes and some are...eh. The TK is a big concern for me and for my fellow providers. I had 13 children as the summer began. One went into first grade, so I knew he wouldn't be back after kindergarten. But the other children, I lost another six kids to pre-K and kindergarten, but mostly to TK. I'm down to five kids right now. Hopefully the reason I stepped off camera, I had a visitor show up with a possibility of enrollment, they're going

to enroll, but my three-year-olds and four-year-olds are just not signing up. And here I sit. I've never sat this long on empty spots like this and it's detrimental to my income.

And for the parents, they have the free programs. They have TK, which is a public school, so public school's free, but they have the free after-school programs and that's what's killing us because I'm not even getting these little guys after school anymore. So it's hard and it wasn't supposed to affect us like this, but it does. And even for providers who might have all the qualifications to be a TK teacher, I have those qualifications, but they're going to fill up the classrooms first and those places first, even a center-based TK program, and I'd be on the bottom of the list before I'd ever get called for sending any kids over to me through the school district. So I don't look for it to happen, to be honest. So that's my biggest concerns.

And the subsidy programs. My other concern is parents having a hard time finding providers who will take the subsidies, not because they have the subsidy, but because the providers charge so much more than what the subsidies pay. And then they want the parents to pay that gap. And that gap, depending on the provider, example, in our area right now, a average two is 204 a week full time through the subsidy. But some of these providers are charging 225, 250, 275 a week for a child, and the parents would have to make up that difference. They can't always do it.

I look at it this way, if they could afford to pay that gap, which could be milk and gas in their car, they wouldn't need the subsidy program. So I'll stay within the limit. These parents of one today was a subsidy program and I told her not to worry about, I'm right there with our program. I charge the same thing the program is paying, so she would never have a gap with me. But that's not always the case. This is where child care is falling short and they're saying there's not enough space for kids in child care. There is. Parents can't afford to pay that gap. And we run out of infant space. So infants is a big thing. We'd really, really, really like to see the state change the age requirement on what they consider infants to be under 18 months and let them count as a child 18 months and older, that'll open up space for those younger toddlers like that. So it's a big fight we've been battling and that's a big concern. Lower the age to 18 months, open up more spaces. So that's really my biggest stuff.

Tonia McMillian:

Thank you, Pat. You just made me think of something that Miren said earlier. The child care providers are subsidizing the subsidy program. Oh my gosh, yeah.

Mary Ignatius:

If it's not the providers, it's also the parents having to pay that gap that she's talking about also.

Tonia McMillian:

Exactly. Exactly, Mary.

Patricia Alexander:

Some programs, those parents have a parent fee to the program and then they'd be expected to pay the gap to the provider. So that can be a lot.

Mary Ignatius:

Well, the parent fee should only be to families earning above 75 percent of state median income if this is a subsidy parent. And that's capped at 1 percent. So if you're hearing from any parents that they're paying family fees, please let us know, because if they're subsidy parent, they should not be paying fees or they should be very low. Yeah.

There's been a lot of conversation about TK and UPK. I wonder if there's a conversation that we could have hearing from folks about what solutions. Now it's become very clear that family child care providers are not part of that UPK vision, right? You have to be part of a faction in order to be part of that UPK vision. And then I saw in the chat that there's a handful of FCCHENs across the state. And I guess I just want to hear from folks, if being a FCCHEN is the only solution right now to getting part of the UPK vision, what are the barriers to becoming a FCCHEN?

Are there any solutions to simplify and make that easier? And maybe you don't even want to be a FCCHEN, I don't even know. But if that is the pathway in. Are there solutions to make FCCHENs easier to access and or are there ideas you might have around how to get, what do you need to be able to communicate with school districts around UPK and making sure they know about you as a resource? But again, I'm presuming you still have to be a FCCHENs in order for the school district to engage the school district. So are there just any ideas, thoughts that you want to share?

Tonia McMillian:

I have a question. For the folks who talked about the special needs in children with disabilities, are there issues with partnering with or going through the regional centers for those children to be approved or for their subsidy?

Mary Ignatius:

Tonia, could we start with this FCCHENs conversation and then go into solutions for special needs?

Tonia McMillian:

Yeah, definitely. Sorry Mary.

Mary Ignatius:

That's okay. So I'm seeing a lot of messages in the chat that FCCHEN providers have to have permits. There are only five counties in California that have FCCHENs. Think COCO, Contra Costa County is on its way to being added to the list. FCCHENs have to have a CSPP contract with CDE. I guess that's through a Title 5 program. Okay, we have some hands, I don't know whose hand went up first. We have Deborah and Zoila.

Tonia McMillian:

It was Deborah. Hey Deb.

Deborah Corley-Marzett:

Hi Tonia. Hello everyone, again. So Mary, if I can ask and just put it out there, everyone doesn't know what the requirements are to become a FCCHEN provider, so we need to know exactly everything that's required and then take what's required and perhaps, I just use this word because I'm being me, have to tweak it and find out how do we allow others to become a part of that program. Because some requirements may be necessarily, and some may not be necessary. And then at the same time, some of us and those who have degrees, I have a business degree, I don't have a child care development degree. I do have some child care development courses, but don't tell me that my degree doesn't weigh anything or means anything. It means everything to me. Other providers who may have different degrees, extra, that should carry some weight as well as one's experience.

Ms. Pat, 50 plus years, she has a list. She's been doing this all this time. Her experience itself weighs something. So again, we need to get to know exactly what's required and CDE should have been doing this, should have been bringing this to the forefront a long time ago. This is what's required and let's see if we can, again, tweak it to make it to where we have more providers that can have access and be a part of this, FCCHEN program. Then you hear, keeping it real, negative things about some of the experience that FCCHEN providers have had. So then the state has to take those negative responses, those negative experiences, and react to them. Don't sit on them, go to those providers and really find out and deal with those networks that are dishing up of a provider having to have a negative response. This has got to be a good experience for everyone and you're going to have to fix this to make it available for more. Sister Zoila, thank you.

Mary Ignatius:

Well, and I just want to say Deborah, I think we need to have a really transparent conversation either in the full council or at the next workforce parent. I don't know if we're doing joint for the next one, but I think having CDE and having FCCHEN providers and child and family child care providers having a really open, transparent conversation about the requirements, the barriers, and again, more solutions to open it up so that family child care providers are seen as an integral part of that UPK vision.

Deborah Corley-Marzett:

And thank you Mary for that. And if I could just simply add, sorry Zoila, it has to be a safe place for providers, because there are providers who have experienced and who have spoken out and have been retaliated against, we don't want a provider to feel as if come to this table, come in this platform, speak and use your voice and then your network doesn't give you any children. Those are experiences. We've got to take that fear out of that experience right there as well, more transparent conversation. Thank you again, Mary.

Mary Ignatius:

Thank you. That's great.

Tonia McMillian:

Zoila, before I call on you, I just want to read this, what Dr. Pat Sullivan put the message in the chat. She put the message sent to parents about FCCs is that it is a less professional level of care. We knew this was going to happen. We told them this was going to happen. UPK is killing family child care.

Mary Ignatius:

Sorry, and if we could just add Sarina's comment that it's not just family child care providers being impacted by UPK implementation. It's also community-based private or publicly subsidized state preschool and general child care contractors who are also being left out. So this doesn't make sense when, the number of three and four-year-olds who need access to care and we are limiting it. So please Zoila, sorry for all the extra comments.

Zoila Toma:

No, no, don't worry ladies. The conversation is good, and I think every point brought up it's important. When it comes to FCCHENs, yes, the requirement seems to be unclear and unfamiliar for many family child educators. On top of that, I'm like, we get paid even less with these programs. And the requirements for us to do more paperwork, it's also even higher. So it's like we don't see, the thing is that family child educators, you tell us what to do, we're going to do it, right? But it needs to be instructor and support because if we need to carry more work, that means that we need to have someone else to support us, another aide. That means that this person needs to get paid now and we are not even getting paid enough.

So that's one of the reason that I left the program out and I still kind of carry some of the components that FCCHEN require because I have the knowledge, but I don't have to respond to no one just because the dynamic of our business and our program, we work with children or different ages, what Patricia mentioned, we still have program after school programs.

Some of my parents don't make it on time to pick up their children at 6:00 P.M. So that means that I still have to drive to pick up that child at six because at 6:37 pm, the parents picking up the child from the program. So it's so many things that we already do and we don't mind doing it. It's just that we need the support, we need the support. We are going to create the infrastructure; we are going to create the program and all that. Right? Just tell us ahead, what do providers need? These educators should have been aware of this since the idea of UPK started. The problem is that they didn't let us know, because we would've been on our toes. Right? We would've been working in making that happen for us to be prepared and ready. But that will create now so many providers trying to jump into that program. That was going to be an overflow for educators. Right now, only is going to be for the ones that are already in prepare without even knowing it. Right? And this is very unfair and unrealistic.

Another thing that they haven't realized, if you a parent and you're picking up children from schools, there's no parking. The police is policing us for the way we are parked, trying to get our children out of these schools, but there's no parking. So it's like how you want to now open the school for more families, more children, but the school

system doesn't work in how you pick up in the timing. And there's four or five schools in just matters of blocks. Because I pick up from five schools that are close to each other and I drive from one, I drive from another. It's a nightmare to get out of there. It's a nightmare to get out of there, but at the same time, it's like how we're going to do it when all this is fully implemented?

Things that I'm like logistically are not working. Why no one have sit down and done all this? Why we haven't brought up to the table to bring up all these concerns that we have? Doesn't make sense. So yes, we need to create a conversation and an open conversation when all these points are just laid out because did hit and miss that today we talk about one thing, tomorrow we talk another something else. It feel like the information is just distorted. It's not transparent, and we are just so worried and concerned about the future of early education. Thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Special needs, Tonia?

Mary Ignatius:

Yeah, special needs time. Yeah. We have I think nine minutes left.

Tonia McMillian:

Yeah. I wanted to know about the process working with regional centers for special needs and children with disabilities because that came up a couple of times. Challenges, the barriers, the hoops. I know they exist.

Debra Ward:

Yes. Tonia, as the director of Cerritos Child Development Center, we had several parents seeking assistance from regional center and unfortunately it took them anywhere from six to almost a year to be seen or to get an appointment or to be told that they weren't eligible. So in that meantime, our staff had to go through special training to support the families, insist that the families work with their doctors, look for outside services through their insurance companies. And so we found that to be quite a challenge and a struggle for staff as well as for the parents. So there are barriers and I don't know what the solutions are, but it is an issue.

Tonia McMillian:

Thank you, Debra. Miren.

Miren Algorri:

So the challenges, and I think I have shared this in the past, we have children who have been referred based on their ASQs, and once the children are referred, they cannot receive the services in our setting. So that is another way to steer the families to have their children attend a state preschool. If they're not enrolled in the district, they do not get the services that they need, which is a disservice to these children and especially because I'll tell you the case of one family, these parent works non-traditional hours. So

taking her child to a three-hour program so her child can get the services that the child needs in order to thrive is not feasible for that parent who is a single parent and just moved to the states.

So those are the kind of situations that we see families being put by the system, not providing the children and the families the resources and the tools that they need for the children to thrive. And again, it's that way where although family child care is the best setting and for that parent is the number one choice, it's putting that parent between a hard place and a rock because that parent of course wants their child to get the resources needed, but they cannot afford losing their job by having their child participate on these three hour program. So these are the kind of stories that we see. These are the kind of struggles that families are facing as their children require some type of support so they can thrive. Thank you.

Tonia McMillian:

Oh, Miren, thank you for sharing, Debra, thank you for sharing. I know we don't have solutions, but we cannot get to solutions unless we hear what the problem is and now there's a consistency. There seems like there's a thread of multiple areas that we've been able to tap into, but we haven't been able to technically really dig deep. And it's time to start digging deep. That's my opinion, but it's time to start digging deep. So any further comments from our committee members? Oh, hey Deb.

Deborah Corley-Marzett:

Hey Tonia, I'm not sure if I'm in the right space or this is what you're looking for, but this is a concern for providers when it comes to, I'm not sure if I'm going to say this correctly or not.

Tonia McMillian:

Oh, you're safe. Share it.

Deborah Corley-Marzett:

For special needs. So as a provider, what providers face is...for providers who want to take on more children with special needs and have the space but may not, how do I say this? So a provider wants to take on another child who might have a special needs IEP and he or she may have a behavior issue and the provider takes on the child. Provider says to the agency, "Well, I charge an additional fee. I have an additional fee for children who have an IEP." The agency looks at the provider and says, we can only reimburse you additional fee if you hire an additional person. If you show us that you need to hire or need additional help for this child. Sorry for my camera.

How can I hire an additional person when I'm being paid pennies? I'm not being reimbursed enough to even hire an additional assistant to help me with the child that has behavior issues. I want the child to be here with me. I want to help and support that parent, but why aren't I entitled to receive that additional fee for having a child with an IEP, proving here's your paperwork and behavior issues. I'm taking the chance to do this, but because I don't hire someone additional, I'm not entitled. That's a problem. Something that has to be addressed, discussed, and talked about for providers,

because providers are taking the children and they have them every day and they're doing everything to support those children, but at the same time being denied the additional reimbursement for having that child with an IEP. It happens every day and all day. That's a problem. Thank you.

Tonia McMillian:

You're absolutely right, Deborah. And usually, we're the first ones to recognize that there's something going on. So, Zoila.

Zoila Toma:

I hear you Ms. Deborah, that it's challenging for educators because I do not want to say no with a child with disabilities, but sometimes I have to. If the child requires one-on-one, I have to be honest with the parent because the safety of their child is at risk and I am not going to put that child at risk. I have to say no because I don't have the support. I don't have the extra assistance to shadow that child everywhere and monitor what that child is doing because when you turn your eye, that child is doing something. So it's for safety of their own child. I have to be very honest and open and transparent with the parent. And sometimes it's even harder. It's heartbreaking to see the parent not finding the support they need with us.

How can you tell that to a parent, right? That's kind of discrimination and I don't want to that myself, but the child, it's a risk. So we need more support when it comes to that. We need to go together with the school because I have children right now with disabilities, the school leave him because he doesn't want to get in the bus. Now the parent have to come and pick up the child, leave their work, and go drop the child at school.

So it is like if the child doesn't want to leave the school because he's having hard time, doesn't want to get in the bus to come back to daycare, that means the parent has to leave work again or myself and go. Right now, I have a child that is unbuckling himself and I told the parent, I'm sorry, I cannot provide transportation no more because your child is doing things in the car that is putting their life and my life at risk. I'm driving and something can happen. So I have to be mindful about all the challenges that we see with a child with disabilities and their levels of child with disabilities. So we all have to think about all this kind of stuff and we need that support 100 percent when it comes to that. Thank you.

Tonia McMillian:

Zoila, thank you. No, I was just going to say we want to give time for public comment. So Miren, I see your hand, so you'll be the last one before we move into public comment.

Miren Algorri:

I want to piggyback on what was just shared about family child care providers not being able to take care of the students with special needs because they require one-on-one and highlight the ramifications. This is something that we just went through some months ago. Young parent with a four-year-old who was autistic, and she worked at Walmart evening shift. I had to turn this family away because the child is a wanderer.

That meant that if I was providing care, I needed someone to be there with us so I could take bathroom breaks and that was impossible. I couldn't hire someone to help me. And like I said, this was evening night care.

And so I just couldn't, it wasn't financially feasible. But I want to highlight the ramifications. These parent was not able to child care for her four-year-old, and now they are unhoused. So because we cannot provide that service, because what we're getting paid through the state does not make it possible, financially feasible for us to provide that service, these families, these children are turned away and their lives are changed in a negative way. These parent and her four-year-old are unhoused because she cannot find a place where her child can be well taken care of because of the particularities of the services that these child requires. Thank you.

Tonia McMillian:

Thank you, Miren. Geez. All right. Karin, it's back to you.

Karin Bloomer:

Okay. Thank you all. This is Karin. We are going to open it up for verbal public comment. The chat remains open as it has throughout the entire meeting for written public comment. Just as a reminder for committee members and others, just to make sure you can understand people who may give their public comment in any number of languages, please do make sure that you have picked the language that you listen in in the interpretation icon at the bottom of your Zoom screen so you can understand everyone.

I'll call on individuals to unmute one at a time. Attendees, please raise your virtual hand if you would like the chance to be able to speak verbally during our meeting. We'll be taking public comment until about two minutes to noon. If we still have hands at that time, we'll have to ask that you please just put your comments into chat. I'm going to ask speakers to please keep their comments to two minutes maximum, and that's really just so that we can enable as many voices to be heard during the time of this meeting. So thank you for being mindful of others who wish to speak. Okay. With that Maeva Maeva Mark, I see your hand. We're going to unmute you on our end. Please go ahead and unmute on yours.

Maeva Mark:

Good morning everyone. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to share. My name is Maeva Mark. I'm the VP of advocacy and policy with Kidango and we are a child care provider in the Bay Area. Today what I'd really like to share with you all as far as what's on our minds, I'm going to break it down into what's immediate, short-term and long-term concerns that we have. As far as with the immediate, right now for providers, we are facing some administrative or regulatory barriers, specifically with the fire and building code that is requiring facilities to install new fire sprinklers. And so I know that we did some advocacy around that, but I think it's really important for us to continue to reach out to the Office of the Fire Marshals to ensure that they are not creating any barriers for us opening our facilities for children.

Second too with that is around licensing and trying to get, we have a lot of folks who are converting their programs to serve younger children, yet we are waiting for more than three months to get an inspector to come and take a look at our facility so that we can open, and we have a large amount of families on the wait list, but we are not getting anyone coming from the licensing to check our facilities. So really want to be able to see if we can find a speedier process for that. Now, in regard to some short-term, oh gosh, I've heard from so many providers who are still trying to recover from the pandemic, and I think it's really important for us to think of some emergency funding for providers who are going to close. And then also with what's happening with the commission and teacher credentialing and the proposal for providers to increase their qualifications through higher education, I think that we should also consider a factor so that those who do pursue those higher qualifications, they get paid more for that.

Lastly, as far as long-term solutions, definitely continuing to advocate for the alternative rate methodology so that our reimbursement rates are based on the true cost of high quality care. And also, something for the committee here to consider as we are working with younger children and looking at the Head start model, what could a whole child, whole family and community approach to serving our children and California look like on the policy-wise and how could we be able to utilize the unspent funds from the expansion of infant toddler care and also unspent funds from contracts to be used specifically for zero to three whole child, whole family community approach. And maybe we can create some sort of a work group or think tank around that. Thank you so much.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you. Marcella. Graves, we're unmuting you. Please unmute on your end.

Marcella Graves:

Good afternoon everyone. Can you hear me?

Karin Bloomer:

Yes.

Marcella Graves:

Hello, my name is Marcella Graves. I'm a child care provider in Fresno over 26 years. And I just want to say number one is rate reform. With the low wages that we're receiving right now, it's crippling providers right now we're trying to go to school, we're trying to keep up, we're trying to provide quality care for our clients. We are also doing special needs non-traditional hours. We're trying to meet the demands of the parents and the children and it's very difficult when you're not receiving what you really truly deserve. So that needs to be really addressed and not to be talking about it but put some action behind it. Thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you Marcella. Serena Lin, we're unmuting you on our end. Please unmute and go ahead.

Sarina Lin:

Thank you so much. Sarina Lin. I'm from San Diego County, parent of a four and a seven-year-old and I work for educational Enrichment systems. I think there's two pieces I wanted to just highlight here. The first, and I said in the chat a little bit is just I don't want this group or family child care homes or educators to do a lot of work when participation in UPK. I just want to make sure that you can actually, if you are an FCCHEN, I don't know, no center that I know of, no private, no public, nobody's really allowed to participate. That doesn't make it any better, but you don't actually participate. They give you very small windows of after-school care and before care. That's really unfeasible. So I just want to make sure that you look into what the state has allocated or allowed the process for participation in UPK before doing work to participate.

Because I'm not sure if that's the stability that we would hope it is, if that makes sense. I think the second piece is that community care licensing, I'm not sure if this is an advocacy piece or just something to continue to talk with the state, but their underfunding and under staffing is hugely problematic. It was mentioned by this first woman on the call that centers are waiting to change their classrooms to serve more infants. Sorry, not center sites, my apologies. All programs are waiting to serve more children and to serve different ages of children. And the community care backlog is putting all of us at risk of closing. So I just want to put that out and highlight that as a potential advocacy piece that should be done sooner rather than later because I think that's really impacting. The impact of TK and taking away the four year olds is further impacted by our inability in some ways to shift and serve in a different way, in a different model. And I think that's it. Thank you so much for your time.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you Sarina. Yolanda Thomas, we're unmuting you on our end. Please unmute and go ahead.

Yolanda Thomas:

Good morning and thank you all for this opportunity to be able to speak out. The top things on my mind, number one, I'm not being able to charge only what my families can afford to pay. And the underlining thing of that is rate reform. Our rates need to be reformed. Number two on my mind, just as I said in the chat regarding what Ms. Deborah had to say, was UPK and them changing the language. The language is already there, but they need to change the language to include FCCs. We must be included with or without a FCCHEN because like I said in the chat, there's only five counties in this large state of California that have a FCCHEN. So we have to be included with or without. There has to be some wiggle room there. And then lastly, I put in the chat, when Deborah Ward, she had said earlier something about quality child care and this and that.

Whenever somebody says anything about quality child care, feel like A who from Whoville just shouting. We are here, we are here. We are here. Our family home, child care providers provide quality care day after day. When other people close their doors. When six o'clock comes, our doors are still open. When 6:00 A.M. comes, our doors are open at four. We are here. I feel like we are specks of dust on the flower that Horton

discovers and it's not a lot of attention brought to us. We are microscopic in this world, and we have to grow bigger. Our words stand for just more than just me. It's not just me speaking right here. I'm speaking for every provider that has their door open right now. Our community is rich, and we just need to all band together to make this one voice louder. Thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you Yolanda. Tessie Ragan, we're unmuting you. Please unmute and go ahead.

Tessie Ragan:

Hi, I'm located in Rosamond, California and so I have a couple of things and one of them is that UPK, we need more of the parents and the educators to come forward. When they started doing UPK, they completely disregarded the fact that learning begins at the age of zero and not just at three or four. So when they began doing this, it made it so that an entire sector infant through toddler was going to become underfunded, was going to have a limited scope of who can actually work with them. And because of that, people like me are in danger of losing their jobs. I have done this in two countries. I have done this in three states as a military member. I can't even get a job in a TK in California because despite the fact that I have a master's degree, they won't take it because it was an out-of-state degree.

So if I lose my family child care business, I can't even go work in a TK program. Now with the way California has set up a lot of these things, they keep saying equity, they keep saying inclusion. You cannot keep saying that you have done equity and inclusion within the state of California and family child care educators actually don't have access to join the UPK system. That families don't have access to picking somebody that can actually work with their child that needs that benefit. That we cannot find people that actually want to do this job because of the low pay. I was offered \$17 an hour with a master's degree because my work history didn't count because they looked down on family child care. We have got to do better in California about throwing around equity inclusion and it not really happening.

Five sections in the entire state of California does not mean that makes it accessible. And if we as parents and as educators do not step up and call the legislators, because we've been talking to them as a part of the group for Safe Family Child Care California, we have been talking to them, they don't understand the gravity of this situation. As somebody that has been doing this for 20 plus years, me not knowing if I'm going to have a job next year, even with a Head Start partnership that might be coming down the pike, that's a big deal. And my area has no child care center. It only has family child care homes, and I do believe we've only got 20 to 30 at max in this area. So we need to actually do something that's actionable that actually requires equity and inclusion and does not lean on processes that nobody can access because I can't access a FCCHEN.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you Tessie. We're going to have to move to the next speaker now. Ghada Ponce, we're going to unmute you. Please unmute it on your end and begin.

Ghada Ponce:

Hello there. Thank you so much. So my name is Ghada Ponce and I do represent Oak Tree Learning Center out here in San Bernardino. And one of my concerns is that when teachers are being hired, like you guys were stating, we're unable to retain and... Well, first we're unable to attain and then retain them because of what we offer in terms of pay. And then also furthermore in terms of how they are being trained when they're in these classes attaining the units that they need. I think that the professors in early childhood education at this point need to express that these children are our future. They're the ones making the educated choices when we are old and in wheelchairs and can't make the decisions ourselves. So they have to be extremely, extremely expressive and this is the future of not just the United States but the world.

And that's not something that they are getting. So when we are hiring, I am asking them what is it like in school? They're just basically going by the books. They're not telling them what to really expect. They're not teaching the things that we really experience on a daily basis. So if these were some of the things that we can teach them, then maybe we can retain and attain the staff that is coming in. Our turnaround is not where, we have a huge turnaround and I'm not liking it, and I don't know what else to do to keep our staff, but I do feel that it does begin in their college courses when attaining these units. So can you guys, I don't know if you are able to do so, but if you are able to come up with a mandate or maybe even create another child development course.

I don't know how all of this works, of course, but allow these teachers to tell them this is what to expect. Show them videos of what it's like so that when they do come in, they're not panicking and running. My former job five years ago, I would hire staff that would come in on their lunch break, they get into the car, turn around and don't come back. So we need to make sure that we are teaching them. So please help me. If it's something maybe I need to volunteer to try to create a program or something along with all of you guys, I'm more than happy to do so because we need the staff to know that these children are our future.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you Ghada. Appreciate it. We're going to move on to Norma Mendez. Norma, please go ahead and unmute. Norma Mendez, please unmute on your end.

Mary Ignatius:

Also, Karin, can you put Yenny in the queue if she wants to speak?

Karin Bloomer:

Sure. Yenny, please feel free to raise your hand in case you'd like to say a few words. Norma, please go ahead. I see you've unmuted.

Norma Mendez:

Okay, sorry I couldn't unmute. Thank you for taking my concerns and letting me speak. I'm a staff member. I do work for a nonprofit that offers both CCTR and CSPP. I've been here for 20 years and it's just sad to see and hear the testimony because it's so true.

How difficult it's even for staff members as well as for parents to access this program. The issues that the providers are going in pay is the same issues that staff members are going with the pay. So I would just like to see, I don't know where is it done? But other programs are able to do it like special five. I know they do it where every year they could go ahead and input, this is your total amount you're getting for this grant and your staff are required that every single year they get a one percent raise.

I don't know why can that be implemented into our contracts? That way we could retain our staff because every year we get thousands and thousands of extra work added and reports added all at the same due date with no additional costs, with no additional reward or not getting compensated for all the work that we do. And at the same time or you do give us some, but you leave it to the discretion of the agency. Don't leave it to the discretion of the agency. Protect your staff, protect the providers, protect the people that work this program because we're not getting it. I have 20 years and sometimes it's been 10 years that I don't even get a raise when I'm the reports manager for this agency. This is really sad and sometimes, yeah, I value education, but sometimes the experience you need to take care of their experience and sometimes they're like, dude, how could I voice myself not to get fired? How could I voice myself to get into what the providers did, form a union for non-profit organizations and the staff members. Hello? Sorry.

Karin Bloomer:

I'm sorry to interrupt you. We do have three more members of the public who'd like to speak and only seven minutes left of the meeting. May I move on?

Norma Mendez:

Just say one more thing about the other burden is the special needs. We need to fight that we cannot only claim kids with special needs to have an IEP and IFSP because we have a lot of students, they have special needs, it's private through doctors. We have documentation and we're not able to claim them, but we're struggling because we still need to make those accommodations. Sorry. And thank you for your time.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you. Please feel free to put more in the chat. We really welcome that Keisha Nzewi, great to see your name. Please go ahead.

Keisha Nzewi:

Good morning. My name is Keisha Nzewi and I'm a co-founder and woman in charge of Black Californians United for Early Care and Education, Black ECE. And at Black ECE, we are transforming our state's early care and education system to provide black children and families with safe, loving and care and learning opportunities. Two days ago, was our IRS anniversary, I call it the day we got our 501 C3 is our two-year anniversary of getting our 501 C3. And what we found in these last two years is that we're the only organization in California dedicated to advocating for safe, nurturing and loving care, early care and education for black children, black families and black early educators. Black ECE unites black early care and education providers, policy

advocates, researchers and families to shape California's policy systems and services to care for black children. And we are the only political and cultural home dedicated to building community and co-learning spaces among black early care and education providers, policy advocates, researchers and families.

And so with that, I want to affirm how strongly we support rate reform and moving towards the landing on the true cost of care because that will lift all boats. But what we do want to point out is that that won't eliminate the racial wage injustice that is faced by black early educators across this country. Our fellow co-founder of Black ECE, Dr. Leah Austin, is the executive director of the UC Berkeley Center for the study of Child Care employment. And they have consistently found that the racial wage injustice for black early educators is a 79 cent average of paid less than their white counterparts. And when you go specifically into lead teachers or center directors, that number is nearly \$2 per hour. Rate reform isn't going to eliminate the racist practices that allows this to happen. But again, it will lift all boats, so then those gaps won't hurt as bad because now we're making less than dirt. Not making less than dirt. But I feel like we should all care about this issue because when black people do better, everyone absolutely benefits.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you. Thank you Keisha. All right, Rebecca Grasty, if you could, we're going to unmute you. If you could please keep your comments to one minute, we would appreciate it. We're going to try to get you and Tracy Tran in and then a comment from Deborah Marzett and then our chair. So others please put it in the chat.

Rebecca Grasty:

Sure. I just want to give a voice to what has already been talked about and what we've written in the chat. I'm a small, licensed family child care home coming up on 15 years of being licensed. I have a California teaching credential, my degree's in social science and additionally family and consumer sciences and trying to stay open and give children and parents that care that they need. We have a lot of these issues that we've talked about, whether it's the infant age and for us, there's no such thing as toddler in family child care, but you move that 18 month old to a center, they have a toddler component that's a less restricted ratio. We need to create some congruency here. And we have a statewide group, Save California Family Child Care that's trying to do that. We're meeting with legislative representatives to create that bill to be able to make that space because essentially we have these toddlers that are languishing in this infant category that if we could move them out with two year olds as centers are allowed to.

California Department of Ed says infants are only up to 18 months. We could make space from those empty spaces approximately 8,000 across the state by our estimation for true infants to have those spaces. And it's also important to remember when we're talking about ratios, those TK classrooms have a ratio of two to 24. In family child care, we are only allowed two to 12. So the rate that those TK classrooms are opening is closing two to four family child cares because family child care, it's a balance. It's not just older kids, it's not just infants. But we cannot retain those numbers. And when full UPK TK goes into effect in 2025, it will be the entire school year loop. This year it was

just September 2nd through June 2nd. Next year it will be September 2nd through September 1st of the next year. And those children who are three years old just starting for those first couple months before they turn four, before September 1st. So these things, we feel like these would help family, child care, parents and the community.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you so much. Tracy Tran. I'm so sorry, but can we ask you to please keep your comments to a minute or less? Please go ahead Tracy. Go ahead.

Tracy Tran:

Okay. Oh, sorry. Hi, this is Tracy. I'm with David Street Community Centers. We do daycare centers on CSPP. We also provide private pay, and we also do alternative payment program. I'm just here to join to see what all the providers have to say and just try to understand because at Alameda, we also have working on a pathway to create a new child care for what Alameda First 5. So I just want to be here to understand, to see all what people have to say and to understand. That way when we have a meeting, I can incorporate that and to bring some idea into the future of the meeting to create this pathway for the child care program. And that's all it is.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you, Tracy. Thank you so much. I do see committee member, Deborah Marzett's hand. Deborah, you want to make a quick comment then I'll turn it to the chairs.

Deborah Corley-Marzett:

Very quick comment. Thank you. I just want everyone to make sure that they heard what Miren had said, that was important what she said. She also mentioned that that parent, because that Miren wasn't able or could afford to have to hire a person for the special needs child that's autistic and a wanderer, that parent lost her job and is now homeless. The system failed her. That's why it needs to be looked into. My heart is heavy for that young lady. All of our hearts should be heavy. Remember, that's one person, but it's happened to many. It's got to end and that regulation has got to be fixed now. Thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Deborah. Thank you Deborah. Mary.

Mary Ignatius:

I was just going to write in the chat, I just want to thank everyone for your love, your passion, your power, parents and providers united are going to make sure our system is a system of healing and no longer a system of harm. So thank you all for all of your comments and we'll bring all of this to the full council meeting. So thank you.

Tonia McMillian:

Thank you Mary. Thank you members. Thank you public for sharing today. And with that, this meeting is adjourned.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you.

ENDS [02:00:08]