



Early Childhood Policy Council

Agenda and Transcripts

Virtual Meeting

Wednesday, February 26, 2025
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Physical Meeting

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

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introduction

- Welcome
- Council updates
- Review of agenda

2. Review of Relevant Items in Governor's Budget Proposal and ECPC Budget Letter

- Presentation
- Council discussion
- Possible Council action

3. Progress on the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care

- Presentation
- Council discussion

4. Update on Rate Reform

- Status update
- Questions from the Council

5. Final Child Care Transition Quarterly Report

- Presentation
- Questions from Council

6. General Public Comment

- Members of the public are invited to provide comment

Attendance:

ECPC Council Members:

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza, Carola Oliva-Olson, Dean Tagawa, Janet Zamudio, Kim Pattillo Brownson, Laura (Kay) Ruhstaller, Lissete Frausto, Lupe Jaime-Mileham, Mary Ann Hansen, Mary Ignatius, Mayra E. Alvarez, Miren Algorri, Natali Gaxiola, Paula Merrigan, Robin Layton, Socorro Martin, Sonia Jaramillo, Tonia McMillian

Parent Advisory Committee Members:

Deborah Corley-Marzett, Lissete Frausto, Mary Ignatius, Patricia Lozano

Workforce Advisory Committee:

AnnLouise Bonnitto, Latonda Williams, Miren Algorri, Patricia Alexander, Tonia McMillian, Virginia Eigen

Guest:

CDSS: Anna Levine, Chana Wynne-Swan, Claire Ramsey, Corey Rodda, Deborah Rawson, Desirae Carrera, Jackie Barocio, Romi Lal-Alarcon, Shanice Orum.
DOF: George Harris, Brittany Thompson

Hosts:

Claire Ramsey, Diana Yactayo, Laura (SP), Elizabeth Orozco (SP), Jateri Willis, Karin Bloomer, Ramee Serwanga, Sarah Sun (CN), Veronique Baumbach, Ya-Nan Chou (CN), Yelka Vargas (SP)

Meeting Transcript:

Karin Bloomer:

We're going to review some housekeeping items. In a few moments we'll be offering the closed captioning feature in Zoom. To access this feature, you'll need to locate the live transcript button at the bottom of your Zoom screen and then click show subtitle. This will allow you to view closed captioning in English throughout the meeting. In just a moment, we'll also offer language interpretation services. 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. In order to provide language access, this meeting will have simultaneous interpretation in English and Spanish. To enable the interpretation feature

if you're using your laptop or desktop, please locate the icon shaped like a globe at the bottom of your screen, click on the language interpretation and then select English. If you are on your phone, iPad, or similar device, then locate the three dot menu in the upper right corner of your screen, click on language interpretation and select English or Spanish.

[The interpreter provides instructions in Spanish.]

Mandarin Interpreter:

[The interpreter provides instructions in Mandarin.]

Thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you. We'll now activate the interpretation channel, so please pick the language channel of your choice at this time. And then a few more items of note.

We'll be opening up the chat feature for five minutes at the end of each agenda item to invite written public comment at each point during the meeting. During the final comment period, we'll also invite verbal public comment. We'll be asking those who give verbal testimony to limit their time to two minutes in order to invite as many voices as possible to share.

Secondly, the slides we share today during the meeting will be posted on the ECPC webpage within the next week. And finally, just a reminder to our council members who have joined us remotely that you're required by law to keep your cameras on during the meeting unless you have technical difficulties. And now I'll turn the meeting over to Claire Ramsey, Chief Deputy Director of California Department of Social Services, who'll be chairing this meeting today.

1. Welcome and Introduction

Claire Ramsey:

Thank you, Karin. Happy to be here with you all. Welcome to the first quarterly meeting of 2025 of the Early Childhood Policy Council. As Karin mentioned, I'm Claire Ramsey. I'm one of the Chief Deputy Directors at the Department of Social Services, and in my current role, I'm overseeing both the Child Care and Development Division and the Community Care Licensing Division, which oversees child care licensing. And it's my pleasure to chair this meeting today. Thank you for having me.

Council members, thank you for attending today. I want to also thank members of the advisory council who are able to be here today. And finally, I want to appreciate the many stakeholders who are attending this meeting and sharing your perspectives through public comment.

We do have a lot of people on the meeting, so for roll call, we will have our support team take note of the council members who are in attendance, so we won't go through an oral roll call. But we do want to take a moment because we have two new council members, and we want to give them each a moment to introduce themselves. So first

I'd like to welcome council member Mary Ann Hansen and ask Mary Ann to come off mute and introduce herself.

Mary Ann Hansen:

Good morning everybody. I am so happy to join the Early Childhood Policy Council and join everybody that's in the meeting today. I'm calling in, I'm joining you from Humboldt up in the northwestern corner of California and the unceded territory and traditional homelands and current homelands of the Wiyot people, so just want to acknowledge that as well.

Part of the reason I'm so happy to join ECPC is that early childhood has been my passion for many years. I've been a family child care provider. I've been the director of a nonprofit child care center. I've spent many years in early childhood workforce preparation, both at UC Davis and at Cal Poly Humboldt and am now the executive director of First 5 Humboldt. And continuing that work in partnership with so many amazing parents and community members whose commitment is to raise up this field and improve services for families. Thank you for giving me a chance to introduce myself and I'm looking forward to diving into all the good work at ECPC. Thanks.

Claire Ramsey:

Thanks Mary Ann. Really happy to have you on the council and bringing all that expertise to this endeavor. And next I want to welcome Socorro Martin to the council. Socorro, would you like to introduce yourself?

Karin Bloomer:

Socorro you need to unmute. She froze. Oh dear. Oh, I see that Socorro froze there.

Claire Ramsey:

Do we want to, Karin, give her just a moment, see if we can get her back on.

Karin Bloomer:

Sounds good. Let's see.

Claire Ramsey:

It looks like maybe she lost connection out of the meeting.

Karin Bloomer:

Yes, I think so. We'll keep our eyes out for her to reenter the meeting and maybe we can find a moment for the introduction at that time.

Claire Ramsey:

That sounds great. What I'll do is, I want to make a couple other announcements and so I'll go through those and then we can see if Socorro has rejoined us.

We do have a couple other council updates. First, I wanted to let everyone know that we have two former council members who are no longer part of this body, so we want to

thank them for their work and make sure everyone's aware that they're no longer on the council. First, Scott Moore resigned from the council at the end of last year and we want to thank him for his five years of service to the council. And then also want to acknowledge that Sarah Neville-Morgan has left the Department of Education at the end of last year and has moved back east, so we're thanking her for her 24 years of state service and her five years on the council.

And then finally, we wanted to share that we have set the council dates for the rest of the year, so this will be for quarters two, three, and four. Karin is sharing a slide as well with the dates, but I'll just also verbally say that they are May 29, August 27 and November 20. Those will be our next three dates for the year. We will post all of these on the ECPC website and send you all the calendar invites. If these change for any reason, we'll let you know. And it looks like we may have Socorro back, so I'll try to turn it back over to her now.

Socorro Martin:

Thank you so much. I'm so sorry. Technical difficulties.

Yes, my name is Socorro and I'm actually representing the union and I've been in child care development for 32 years. I was a preschool teacher for many, many years and now I actually have my own home daycare and I'm looking forward to learning from all of you and just chiming in on our side and what we would like to see. Thank you.

Claire Ramsey:

Thank you, Socorro. Welcome and thank you for bringing all your expertise to this council. We appreciate it.

Now we're going to do a quick review of our agenda. I'm going to just give one second for a slide to come up on that. Great. We are obviously in our welcome right now. We're then going to review our relevant items in the governor's budget proposal and our ECPC budget letter that you all should have received a few days ago. Then we're going to do a brief overview on our progress on the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care. We're going to have a presentation on Rate Reform and an update. We will present on our final child care transition quarterly report. And then we will open to public comment and finally adjourn.

We have a very full schedule. I know this is my first meeting, but I understand that this is pretty par for the course, that these meetings are always jam-packed, so excited to preside over another one.

I do want to mention we will have, I didn't mention, we will have our council members, Andrea Fernandez Mendoza and Donna Sneeringer present on the proposed letter to the ECPC, so we'll be turning it over to them when we get there. Let me pause now because we're going to let Karin open it up for the first public comment period.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you so much. Yes, at this time, that concludes the welcome agenda item, so we'll open up the chat feature for the next five minutes to welcome written public comment.

And while we do that, we'll move on to agenda item two and I'm passing it over to Dr. Lupe Jaime-Mileham.

2. Review of Relevant Items in Governor's Budget Proposal and ECPC Budget Letter

Lupe Jaime-Mileham:

Perfect. All right, well good morning everyone, and so pleased to be with you all this morning. I am going to present the first topic, which is to review the governor's budget proposal presentation. This is the fiscal year 2025-26 proposed budget, and we will be covering some CDSS programs. I'm also being joined by our Education Department of Finance partners, both Brittany and George Harris, who will also provide a slide in regard to the California Department of Education.

As a reminder, these are budget proposals and may change over the next few months as we are in the budget cycle. And to maintain a balanced budget, California has determined to usher in a budget with significant commitments to accountability, transparency, and results. So with that opening, let me go to the next slide. Thank you.

A little bit of background on this slide. The California Department of Social Services, CDSS, Child Care and Development Program serves over 350,000 children annually. These programs are provided a variety of state subsidized child care services, quality improvement plans, and local child care development programs and policies, while providing robust technical assistance and support to counties, contractors and community of interest. The purpose of these programs is to provide equitable and stable access to child care development services to lower income families and children in lower income brackets. Okay, let's go to the next slide.

The governor's budget includes a 6.4 billion in total funds, that includes 4.6 billion in general funds, in fiscal 2025-26 for child care and development programs. A net increase of 287.8 million from the Budget Act of 2024. This net increase reflects the 2024-25 general child care expansion, rising caseloads, and a 2.43% cost of living adjustment as required by statute. Since 2016-17, the child care and development budget has grown around 200%. Something to celebrate there. Let's go to the next slide.

A budget change proposal titled Early Childhood Policy Council, ECPC, Reappropriation will request a reappropriation of 75 2000 general fund that is projected to go unspent and to be used for the ECPC for the next three years through June 30 of 2028.

(incidental talk) No worries. These funds will be used to convene meetings to discuss and provide recommendations on all aspects of California's early childhood education system. The CDSS reporting requirements, again, these are proposals in the 2025-26 budget, so this is removing CDSS programs. This I reference as cleanup language where it proposes to remove references to programs administrated by the California Department of Education that were inadvertently carried over from the Department of Education ED code into the Welfare and Institution code when the child care and development programs were transferred from CDE to CDSS.

And then there's also another cleanup proposal, which is the part-time and full-time definition implementation. This cleanup changes the part-time and full-time definition

from 30 hours to 25 hours per week, which is what we have in play, but it gives us strong cleanup language that results in the hourly, weekly, and monthly definitions to be based on a five hour instead of a six hour. The legislature updates the part-time and full-time definitions from 30 hours to 25 per week as of Senate Bill 140, chapter 198 in the 2023, but a provision was inadvertently left defining full-time as six hours per day. This proposal corrects that disparity. These proposals aim to expand support for families and providers with a system that is equitable, accessible and consistent.

Let's go to the next slide. This slide, Cost of Care Plus Rate payments. Happy to jump into this slide that talks about the budget maintains funding to continue the Cost of Care Plus Rate monthly payments adopted for the state subsidies child care providers consistent with requirements related to the reimbursement floor established in the 2024 Budget Act. I'm sorry, since January of 2024 and through June of 2025 or until a successor agreement is reached, all family child care home providers and centers serving children enrolled in subsidies care, having been receiving a monthly child of care plus in addition to the regular reimbursement rate. We continue to work towards a single rate structure and will use an alternate methodology for estimating the Cost of Care.

As outlined in Chapter 73 statute of 2024, the administration will provide the legislature a timeline for transitioning to reimbursement rates informed by the Cost of Care under the state's alternate methodology, rather than the current structure that is largely informed by the private market rates. We remain committed to a transparent alternative methodology process that affords multiple opportunities for input. Also want to note that this topic will be discussed more extensively later in the agenda. Let me go to the next slide.

And then finally, we will discuss the progress update with the child care provider United of California, CCPU. The current memorandum understanding with CCPU is set to expire on June 30, 2025. On December 8, 2025, by mutual agreement, the state and CCPU open the bargaining table to negotiate the state's next assessor agreement. With that, I'm going to pass it over to George from the Department of Finance to present the next slide.

George Harris:

All right, good morning everyone. George Harris, Department of Finance. Thank you Lupe for transitioning over to me. As mentioned, the slide will go over the early education proposals for the governor's budget, covering Transitional Kindergarten, the California State Preschool Program, and the Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program.

Beginning with Transitional Kindergarten or TK, the 25-26 governor's budget supports the full implementation of Transitional Kindergarten, increasing overall program funding to 3.9 billion ongoing Proposition 98 general fund. The full implementation includes 2.4 billion alongside expanding the eligibility to all children who turn four years old by September 1, providing access to roughly 60,000 additional children. Furthermore, the governor's budget provides an additional 1.5 billion ongoing Proposition 98 general fund to support further lowering the average student to adult ratio from 12 to one to 10 to one in every Transitional Kindergarten classroom.

The next program I'll be covering is the California State Preschool Program. The 2025-26 governor's budget proposes 2.9 billion to support the California State Preschool Program. And this proposal includes 1.9 billion for Prop 98 general fund, which is the local education agency state preschool programs and 1 billion for the non-Proposition 98 General fund. And I'll also know the non-local education agency preschool programs.

There is a COLA adjustment set for all California state preschool programs at 2.43%, and there's 19 million provided for the Proposition 98 general fund and 10 million towards the non-proposition 98 general fund. And the proposed budget maintains funding for current state preschool policy and program requirements.

Finally covering the Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program. In the 2024 Budget Act funding for the Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program was adjusted from 250 million to 100 million. And the 2025-26 governor's budget includes a corresponding adjustment to decrease state level activity funding from 50 million to 10 million with the difference provided directly to grantees. With that, thank you all for your time and I'll be passing the presentation back to Lupe.

Lupe Jaime-Mileham:

Thank you. For this particular slide I'll focus on the Safety Net Program Budget Proposals. So I will be diving into those programs that CDSS administers.

California was selected to participate in the Federal Work and Family Well-being Pilot to test alternative performance measures in the TANF program. California's pilot will build upon a strong foundation of supportive and barrier removal services to facilitate climate employment as well as well-being. More details of California's pilot will be released soon.

The governor's budget proposes a maximum aid payment increase of 0.2% for CalWORKs families. It would bring the non-exempt MAP level to 1,176 per month. It also proposes a 2.3 million, 1.1 million general fund investment and a contract with the office administering hearings to provide applicants and recipients with access to an impartial hearing for some bucks. And the Commodity Supplemental Food Program.

And finally, the governor's budget proposes an investment of 7.6 million, which is 2.7 million in general fund to allow the department to use the National Accuracy Clearinghouse an interstate data matching system that helps prevent households from receiving SNAP benefits in more than one state simultaneously. We go to the next slide.

Next I will cover the child welfare budget proposals. The governor's budget proposes an investment of 1.7 million, 1.2 million general fund, to support the implementation of the child and adolescent needs and strength, which is referenced as CANS, C-A-N-S, fidelity and training activities in preparation for the implementation of the tier rate structure as part of the child welfare Rate Reform. The tier rate structure will replace the interim rate structure for foster care rates paid to caregivers and providers and introduce a new approach where, unlike previous rate structures, the rates will be determined by the child, non-minor dependent needs and strengths regardless of their placement settings. It also includes a 1.5 million investment to continue the improved data quality cleanup for data conversations through the end of the Child Welfare Service/CARES, C-A-R-E-S, developmental phase. Let's go to the last slide.

This concludes our brief presentation on the overview of the fiscal year 2025-26 budget proposal for CDSS programs and other programs. Thank you so much and turn it all back to Karin.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you, Lupe. At this time, I believe Lupe and George are open to taking any questions from the council about the governor's budget proposal. So we'll just look for raised hands. See Andrea's hand. Please go ahead.

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

Good morning. I have a really quick question. On the CSPP allocation slide, could you please repeat the amounts to the LEAs and the non-LEAs and were the allocations made to continue existing funding or what adjustments were made? Were there any adjustments made to the funding for that program?

George Harris:

Hi, George Harris, Department of Finance. Happy to answer that question. There was 1.9 billion for the LEAs and 1 billion for non-LEA. For the cost of living adjustment... You also asked for the COLA, is that right?

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

I was asking if there were any adjustments made to the amount of funds that were allocated or was it to continue to fund existing programs?

George Harris:

Okay, sorry. There was two adjustments. The first being there was a cost of living adjustment for both LEA and non-LEA. There was 19 million added as a cost of living adjusted for the LEA California State Preschool Program and then another 10 million non-LEA for cost of living. There was one adjustment made due to from the last budget year, which was restoration of funding from one-time savings. There was 519 million added back for Proposition 98 general fund and 135 million for non-Proposition 98 general fund.

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

Thank you very much.

Karin Bloomer:

I see Mayra Alvarez's hand next.

Mayra Alvarez:

Thanks Karin. And let me just start by saying thanks to the committee that worked on this letter. These are always a joy to work on and across all of the feedback that people get, so thank you. And I'm going to pile on. One of the things that... I have suggestions as far as in addition to the letter-

Karin Bloomer:

Mayra?

Mayra Alvarez:

Yes.

Karin Bloomer:

So sorry to interrupt you. I'm wondering before we move on to the subcommittee reviewing the draft letter, I think this is an opportunity for questions and comments about the governor's budget proposal more broadly that Lupe and George just shared. So maybe-

Mayra Alvarez:

Oh, just kidding. Okay. I can phrase my question from that perspective then I'll give context to the group. Okay, great. Sorry about that. I was clearly jumping in.

Karin Bloomer:

You're ready.

Mayra Alvarez:

I appreciate the overview of the child care pieces and the child welfare pieces. One of the great difficult responsibilities of the Early Childhood Policy Council is to bring a whole child approach to the work that the administration is doing to focus on young children. And one of the big pieces of that is healthcare coverage and dependence on our Medi-Cal program with over five and a half million kids depending on it, including 40% of all births. Curious if you could talk at all about improvements to Medi-Cal moving forward, a commitment to continuous coverage. Last year, the final budget did include those important investments with the support of the ECPC in our budget letter. We were thrilled to see that. Obviously Proposition 35 will impact those funds and would welcome any comments around the administration's commitment to continuous coverage and ensuring our young children stay enrolled in Medi-Cal, especially given the federal context.

Lupe Jaime-Mileham:

Appreciate the question and I appreciate you taking us to reminding us in regard to a whole family whole child agenda that we are chartered to do within this commission here. At this point, I'm not prepared to be able to speak directly in regard to the investments. I am more than happy though to take this back and make sure that we follow up. It's a very critical piece that you are raising, one, in regard to commitment that I'm hearing, and most importantly, what was included in the budget to reflect that investment. So happy to do that. Before I pause there, just want to make sure, Claire, that there is not anything else that you're aware that you would like to add.

Claire Ramsey:

No, thanks Lupe. Mayra, I think we want to also check back with our colleagues at the Department of Healthcare Services since that is their expertise and budget area, but it's a great question and one we'll definitely loop back with you on.

Karin Bloomer:

Okay. With that, I see Deborah Corley Marzett's hand.

Deborah Corley Marzett:

Oh yes. Thank you so much. First I want to say welcome to Mary Ann in Humboldt. My son is a Humboldt alumni. And I also want to welcome my sister Socorro to the policy council. Thank you.

Dr. Lupe, you mentioned multiple opportunities for input for the true cost of care, can you please give me clarity? Are you talking about the past opportunities or new and more opportunities for input? I just need clarity, please.

Lupe Jaime-Mileham:

Yeah, thank you for the question. We've had several different and continue to have several different areas where we continue to receive any feedback regarding the cost of care and the alternative methodology. From the exception we had the group that came together made those recommendations to the state in regard to moving and leaving the rate and the regional market rate and moving to a single rate with the rate and quality advisory meeting. We currently continue to have rate and quality advisory meetings, which we have one coming up next month. And we'll be speaking about that shortly as an agenda item and that also becomes a public setting to be able to send both your verbal and written feedback in those meetings. And then the next piece is Early Childhood Council heard from you saying this is important. Please bring that topic as a standing topic to this table. And so we have provided that as an agenda item that we will be speaking to later today and then be able to also collect.

And then there is also, which I will make sure we list that, we also have written comments that you can always provide us written comments. Those are just a few of the different ones. I know that just personally, even the contractor meetings are an opportunity where contractors also raise public hearings as the budget cycle continues are also places where we hear about this. And then the transition report that we have for the community is another space of that. And then we are in conversations with CCPU regarding the bargaining table itself as another vehicle. So that's just a couple things that I just thought of but I'm sure I've left other areas out.

Deborah Corley Marzett:

I appreciate that and I appreciate the meetings, but what I honestly would appreciate more as other providers is movement, reaction. It's one thing to sit at the table continually and have these meetings, but if you're going to have a meeting, it can't be a stale meeting. It has to be meetings that cause actions that have actions behind them. And I think that is a part of what is discouraging to providers as we continue to receive these low rates and go through the things we go through and suffer the way we suffer.

But yet the meetings continue, but there's no movement. So I'm asking for the meetings, if you're going to have the meetings, let's put some action behind it. Thank you.

Lupe Jaime-Mileham:

Thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Thanks Deborah. Sonia, I see your hand next.

Sonia Jaramillo:

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity. Good information and I appreciate that. So one of the things that I didn't hear, and maybe I missed it is, is there further clarification in the language regarding the provision of services to four-year olds by non-LEA providers? And I've been getting questions from non-LEA providers because parents either want to have their four-year-olds continue to be in the preschool, but programs are getting mixed information regarding whether or not the funding will continue. So I'm wondering if after July 1st, if all of this goes through, is there going to be a change? Are there penalties attached to this? What are the opportunities that we have for our families based on community need? Thank you.

Brittany Thompson:

Was somebody else speaking? Brittany Thompson, Department of Finance. Are you referring to the two-year-olds served by preschool? Because you said-

Sonia Jaramillo:

It's actually four-year-olds that we have going to TK, but some families want to have their little ones continue and the preschool option not going to a TK classroom. And programs are now wanting to provide the service...

Brittany Thompson:

So are you asking, are they required to enroll their child in TK?

Karin Bloomer:

You know what, Sonia appeared to just have some technical difficulties. We lost her camera and her sound.

Robin Layton:

I don't want to speak for Sonia, but possibly maybe it's about whether or not the parental choice is still intact for families with four-year-olds. Will they still have a choice to attend CSPP or TK?

Brittany Thompson:

Correct-

Robin Layton:

I'm not speaking for Sonia, but that's probably what she meant.

Brittany Thompson:

Okay. Yes, that is correct. They will not be forced to enroll their kids into TK. They still have a choice.

Karin Bloomer:

And Sonia, just checking to see if, again, we don't have sound for you, but Sonia, you want to try one more time? Okay. All right, we'll just keep an eye out for Sonia's audio. Okay, next hand I see is Mary Ignatius.

Mary Ignatius:

Hi, good morning. I think one of you mentioned transparency and in the spirit of transparency, I didn't see in either presentation any mention of the Prop 64 cannabis tax dollars that have been going to pay for slots. And that's something I've been following. And with the pause in the slots this year, there is I believe something, well over \$200 million that was generated with those cannabis tax dollars. And so I just wanted to how those dollars are being proposed to be spent. Is it just to maintain the current level of slots? So it'd be good to hear what you're doing with that.

And then second, and along with these taxes, there were some negotiations made that would potentially trigger the need for a general fund adjustment in case those revenues went below a certain number. But there's also a bill to try and eliminate that. And so I'm just wondering what is the administration's plan if those dollars are to get reduced, how will it impact funding the slots that are sort of in statute, the 44,000 that are promised for next year if there are changes to the cannabis revenues? I hope that made sense.

Lupe Jaime-Mileham:

It does, it does. Thank you, Mary. So happy to take that question and also I'll open it up to either Claire to add in anything I've missed. So the budget proposals does continue to maintain the Prop 64 dollars that you are referencing to continue to fund the slots. As you reference, there is a commitment on the legislature's side, which was called out as part of last year's budget to have the slot increases happening. At this point, we don't have a public proposal in regard to a switch in regard to Prop 64 or if there is anything specifically to address in Prop 64 revenue is not at the full level that we are there. But we are tracking as part of our budget cycle to make sure that we continue to monitor those levels.

Mary Ignatius:

Yeah, because every one of those dollars is going to be critical, especially as we're talking about Rate Reform, and the cost of slots next year should increase because we will have one increases to the rates. And so yeah. George, did you want to?

George Harris:

Yeah, George Harris, Department of Finance. I just had a follow-up just one of your question. Was that the bill you were referencing, was that a bill that was introduced this year?

Mary Ignatius:

Yeah. Yeah.

George Harris:

Could you share the bill number?

Mary Ignatius:

Yeah, it is, I believe it's 584. I'll put it in the chat. I'll look it back up. Put it in the chat. But we just want to make sure there's some planning in place to fund those slots and adjust the increase to rates. And then just another comment on the CalWORKs increase the 0.2% increase. I think for some families it equates to \$2 a month. Families can't buy a carton of eggs with that anymore. Can't buy a gallon of milk anymore with that. I just hope the legislature will do more to increase that amount because of today's cost of living and all of the threats from the federal level. \$2 a month just seems insufficient. Thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Thanks Mary. Paula Merrigan, please go ahead.

Paula Merrigan:

Thank you. I have a question on George's presentation on the funding for TK where there's 2.4 billion for the expansion and another 1.5 billion for the staffing ratio of 10 to one. But I'm hearing LEAs saying that they've also seen that they can have 24 to three. So I just need clarification on that. Is it 10 to one or is it going to be eight to one?

George Harris:

George Harris, Department of Finance. Thank you for the question. So the proposal has a funding ratio of 10 to one, but it's still the maximum classroom size for a TK classroom is 24 students, which is why there's still that three staffer ratio if they choose to max out the classroom at 24 students.

Paula Merrigan:

So when LEA has a choice to do 10 to one or eight to one.

George Harris:

Well, the statute, the proposal does require a 10 to one ratio. But if a classroom is decided to go over 20, between 21 and 24, they would need a third staffer.

Paula Merrigan:

Okay. All right. Thank you.

George Harris:

Yeah, thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Robin Layton.

Robin Layton:

Hi, Robin Layton and I am from San Diego. I represent Educational Enrichment Systems, a nonprofit Title V organization serving over 1100 families. And I just want to express a concern, not necessarily a question, because I don't think the departments have the answer. But I was a participant on the rates reform work group. We had a blue ribbon commission, then they had the master plan, then they had the rate and quality work group, which I was a participant on, and now I'm also on the rate and quality panel. And what's concerning is that we're hearing that the report or the alternative methodology will be approved by the end of this fiscal year, but there's nothing in the proposed budget that allocates or puts aside any funding towards implementation. So not even a mention of all of the hard work that we've been putting in and the time that we've been putting in to this panel to actually get to this point.

And so in my 40-year career, what I'm predicting unfortunately, unless the advocates can really make a difference is that they're going to come up with another committee. So while we appreciate the cost of care continuation, that's one-time only money. That's not helping us increase salaries on a permanent basis. So the fact that there is no mention of the current workgroup panel and the work that's being done and the fact that there is going to be an approval of an alternative methodology, there's nothing in the budget that mentions anything about implementation or set aside. So it's very concerning and I really want... I'm really saying this for the public that's on this call that the department people that are presenting for us today, they don't have the power to put into the governor's budget what we're asking for. It's up to us as advocates to really speak up, especially the Title 5 providers. Thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Thanks Robin. I don't see any more hands, which leads me to believe we should move on to the next part of the same agenda item, which has to do with the ECPC proposed letter to the governor and legislative leadership. So maybe as we transition to that, we'll just acknowledge George Harris and Brittany Thompson from the Department of Finance and appreciate if they need to move on to other meetings that we understand and thank them so much for their participation today.

Okay. So I'm going to hand things over to Andrea Fernandez Mendoza, and I know Andrea, if Donna Sneeringer is able to join us for a short time, she will. But I'll turn to you to introduce the work that you and Donna did.

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

Good morning everyone. And thank you George and, her name just slipped out of my head, I apologize. But thank you for.... Thank you, Brittany, from the Department of

Finance that was very helpful to answer a lot of our questions and honestly inform what we did in the letter. So Donna and I basically looked at the letter and made some changes to update it and bring it to the issues that we're having now.

So as you read through, you'd notice that we did include the current budget challenges that are before us with the wildfires, but also the federal climate that we're in and the changes that have been rapidly being thrown at us from the federal administration. So again, we wanted to recognize the work that administration and legislature did the last budget cycle because they were very responsive to our asks and including center-based providers, community-based organizations in the benefits that came down from the negotiations. So we wanted to validate and appreciate their acknowledgements and their investments, but also to highlight that we need those sustenances to continue, especially in light of what we're facing.

And this includes the supporting community of color. And we highlighted certain ones just to, again, thank them, the family fees, extending the hold harmless and providing the increased funding to child care providers and programs to keep the doors open. We did massage a little bit of them to include, continue the funding for the rate reform and ensure that the compensation for the true cost of care reflects what's actually happening in today's communities, which we hear, we see in the chat. Because of all the actions that are happening at the federal level, it's impacting our families on the ground as well as ourselves.

Also, the state contracted programs were highlighted in the federal requirement of paying based on the child's authorized enrollment. And if you notice the line at the bottom of the page, the final rule requires that states to base child care providers payments on authorized enrollment and not attendance. So we wanted to highlight that. And also hold Newsom to his promise to fund the 200,000 child care spaces by budget year '25, '26.

And then again to provide that ongoing financial support to help us retain and attract members into the workforce. Because as most of you know, if you're in the field, we are bleeding out staff. We are not able to keep teachers in our programs. They're leaving for more lucrative jobs. And so providing access and ensuring that we are giving access to our most vulnerable populations means we need to keep the doors open and be able to fund programs at all different levels of meeting families' need for care.

So I welcome any question, I don't know if Donna was able to join us or if she had anything to add, but basically it's a very similar letter. You're going to see a lot of the same components just updated to reflect this year's budget and what we're looking at moving forward plus contemporary needs that we are facing right now. Were there any questions or thoughts?

Karin Bloomer:

Great. And seeing a bunch of hands, and maybe I'll just preview mostly for those who are new to the council, but just as a reminder to all council members as we've done in the past, let's take some time asking questions of clarification from Andrea. And then once those questions are through, we can begin to invite any proposed specific edits. If there are council members who feel there are necessary edits in order to endorse this letter, we can see if we have the time and the ability to have consensus around specific

edits and then take time for a verbal endorsement so long as members are not members of the administration. So that's just process we've used in the past. And with that, Andrea, I'm happy to share the raised hands in the order I see them. If that works for you.

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

Please do. Because I'm juggling multiple screens, so I would appreciate it.

Karin Bloomer:

Wonderful. Okay, on my screen, I see Deborah first.

Deborah Corley Marzett:

Thank you for that and thank you for the letter. All I'm really asking, if you can just go to the top of the letter and scroll very slowly down to the bottom of the letter so that the public can also read this and see what we're doing and putting out. So if you can just make that scroll very slow for everyone. Thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Thanks Deborah. And I should have mentioned that any individual who'd like to look at this letter in its entirety can find it on the ECPC webpage under today's meeting tab as well. So thank you so much for mentioning the need for public to be able to read it as well. Okay, I see Mayra Alvarez's hand.

Mayra Alvarez:

Thanks. Okay, now it's the right time. I apologize. So huge thanks again for the work on the letter. I agree that it's very similar to last year and continues to beat the drum on these important priorities. So I just have a couple of pieces of feedback. One is just on the definition of who the ECPC is, adding child development since it's part of our mission. And I have the edits and trapped changes that hopefully will facilitate things better.

On the credit that we give to the state, I added in or I'm suggesting that we add in that the governor did preserve some of the health and social services programs that were alluded to by Lupe, for example, like the pilots on the CalWORKs fiscal responsibility, the Medi-Cal expansion for undocumented people as well as access to public education. So my suggestion is if we're given some kudos, give them kudos across the whole child spectrum.

And then my last one is a bullet that we added last year around Medi-Cal coverage and protecting that coverage. Again, who knows what's going to happen with the continuous coverage provision given the limitations on us with the federal administration and the resources, but the department can act to do what it can to protect Medi-Cal coverage. And that's what the bullet I'm suggesting raise. So I can add that in the chat if that would be easier, but I can also send my track changes suggestions, but I wanted to raise it to the group to see if people would be open to those additions.

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

Would it be easier to put it in the chat so that we can... Or how would you prefer to handle that?

Karin Bloomer:

Yeah, thanks Andrea. I think it would be helpful, Mayra, if you could both put the specific edits in the chat and then if you're also able to email me, it sounds like you have a version of this letter with the track changes, then I could potentially take a moment to also grab that to share with the council and the public. So both, Anne, would be great. And I see you've already put some things in the chat. That's great. So really I think what's most important is for council members to look at Mayra's suggested edits because really as long as we have that conceptual support, I can technically make these edits immediately following the meeting. But what we really need is to hear from council members regarding whether you would support these changes. So Mayra, I think the chat suffices.

Mayra Alvarez:

Great. Thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Okay, Mary, your hand is next.

Mary Ignatius:

I just started coughing as you told me. Can we just put something about either the Prop 64 dollars or... I know we've had conversations about every dollar that is dedicated to child care should remain in the child care system. So I don't know. I can work on the language, but I just think we need to put something around the dedicated funding source and the administration making a commitment to maintaining their promises on funding that's going into the system.

Karin Bloomer:

Thanks, Mary. Maybe again, for the sake of council members being able wrap their brains around proposed edits, if you could take a few minutes to generally give a draft sentence into the chat. It doesn't have to be perfect, but just so people can wrap their brains around it, that would be great.

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

It is in the letter too. Because there are different parts that it might fit into. So please also put where you think it would fit best.

Karin Bloomer:

Thanks, Andrea. Okay, Robin, see your hand.

Robin Layton:

Yeah, thank you. Thank you Andrea and Donna for putting this letter together. I just want to caution us that with so many edits we could end up with a third page and we really need to get this approved today. Otherwise, it won't go to where it needs to go before the May revise. So I just want to make sure that something gets approved today. And then not sure if this is the right time, but I also want to go put out there that we also bring to our, now that we know our dates for the year, the May 29th meeting, if we could bring another letter that addresses the reactions to whatever the May revise might be.

Karin Bloomer:

Thanks, Robin. And so defer to, of course, Claire on this in terms of just historically, again, just to observe Bagley-Keene Public Meeting Act rules. Historically, two members of the council have volunteered to spearhead letters in advance of meetings so long as the council is supportive of that. And so I imagine we'd be looking for both support from council members for such an action in the chat and or verbally and then two volunteers to be on that subcommittee. When we include more than two, we then subject the council to public meeting roles that have their place but also bog down the process in terms of what's needed to then for the subcommittee to meet.

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

And just, if I may, one of the reasons that we were a little more generalizing in upholding existing support systems and the investments that were made into families, we left it open so that it could be inclusive of different items because we were trying to keep it short, succinct and on two pages. Usually when letters get longer, people don't listen. They don't read them; they don't pay attention to them. So we were very much trying for brevity while including the Medi-Cal, the different funding and programs that are very important to all of us. And so we're going to need to massage it a little bit.

Karin Bloomer:

Thanks Andrea. Okay, Deborah, I see your hand.

Deborah Corley Marzett:

Yes. Thank you. Can you go back down to the first letter, the last paragraph, if you don't mind, please? Right there. And it reads, "We also recognize and appreciate the administration's continued support for Rate and Quality Advisory Panel, including the consideration of center-based programs in CCPU's negotiations." Can you give me some clarity there? I'm not sure if it sounds as if CCPU is negotiating for centers because we're not. But some clarity there, please.

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

So the reason that was included, and that was one of the things that wanted to be elevated was because what the administration did was what was given to family, friend and neighbor, family child care homes who were under the CCPU agreement was also supported on the center-based side. And they technically didn't have to because they are obviously negotiating with CCPU, but they offered those same graces to center-based programs, which helped tremendously and helped keep the doors open for

center-based programs as well. So that's why that was included. Not necessarily that CCPU is negotiating on center-based behalf because we know that that's not the case, but administration did extend those support systems to the center-based programs as well.

Deborah Corley Marzett:

Right. So since this particular language may lead them to think that. And so I think somewhere it has to be... And no, I don't have an idea of the language to put in except to make sure it doesn't lead to that question because that's what it makes me think. And that's what it's going to make others think. And that's just my critique on it. But we just have to really make sure it's completely clear and separated and perhaps not even, yeah, mentioned in there. That's all. Thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Thanks Deborah. Robin, I see your hand and then Mary Ann.

Robin Layton:

Yeah, I agree with Deborah because when I read this, and I think we've had this maybe same type of paragraph before, I was under the impression that center-based programs were part of the CCPU negotiations. But maybe what Andrea is saying is that we're not part of the negotiations, but the administration, once the CCPU negotiations are complete, they include center-based programs in whatever increases come out of those negotiations. Is that the case?

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

That is more what is happening, and it isn't necessarily the same things, but the same allowances are... So for example..., and I'm like a deer in the headlights right now, I apologize. There are so many different little aspects to it. But yes, the same allowances are being afforded to... So for example, the whole harmless was one in the last round of negotiations. They were also; the hold harmless was also afforded to center-based programs that were not under the CCPU. So kind of same for same even though we were not being negotiated for.

Robin Layton:

Right? Which is a concern for center-based programs, like who's negotiating for us? That's where the public, there's almost 400 people on here, center-based programs really need to follow, and really pay attention to the call to actions that come out through, for example, Every Child California, because your voice is the only voice that's going to be considered negotiations. They need to hear from center-based programs.

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

Very much so. And since there is no formalized organization that is representing everyone like the CCPU is, it is important that administration is honestly thanked for including center-based programs because without those things that they afforded them,

centers would not have been able to stay open. They would not have been able to get through the past few years unscathed and more centers would've closed.

Karin Bloomer:

So I've just put a suggested edit in the chat for that sentence. And so again, since, just to be clear, really we're looking for specific language edits so that all council members feel comfortable whether to support or feel the need to oppose this letter. So again, in a short while here, we would be looking for support pending adoption of the edits proposed in the chat.

Robin Layton:

What about instead of "the consideration," the inclusion of center-based programs following negotiations? Consideration to me is too nice. We want to be more firm and say that we're included, which I think is the same wording that we used earlier or in this draft, but now we're just moving the words around.

Karin Bloomer:

So Robin, the inclusion of center-based programs following negotiations with CCPU?

Robin Layton:

Yeah. Can you read the whole sentence now with that edit?

Karin Bloomer:

Sure. We also recognize and appreciate the administration's continued support of the Rate and Quality Advisory Panel, including the inclusion of center-based programs following negotiations with CCPU to address the state's willfully inadequate reimbursement rate structure.

Robin Layton:

I think that...with include and including...

Karin Bloomer:

Okay. So while people think on that and potentially suggest what that language, if there's any changes to the edit there, let's turn to Mary Ann Hansen who's had her hand raised.

Mary Ann Hansen:

Good morning. I just want to say two things. One, I think Mayra's last bullet suggestion for the second page is much better than I would've worded it. I think it's pretty imperative that we include some language around protecting healthcare access, not only to remind the administration that the ECPC has a whole child lens, but also given the federal climate because changes are going to have huge ripple effects on our families, and I think it's important that we remind the administration about that context. And then the other is just a very small correction. I had noticed this in last year's letter

too. If we could correct the Senate pro Tempore name. It's listed as Mark and his first name is Mike.

Karin Bloomer:

Oh, my goodness. Thank you Mary Ann for calling that out. We will certainly make that change.

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

Thank you Mary Ann. Any other thoughts? Karin, do I hand it over to you at this point?

Karin Bloomer:

Well, thanks Andrea. I think, so again, just to reiterate, Mayra has made specific proposed edits in the chat. So the council would be entertaining those edits as part of your consideration of the endorsement, we are looking for suggested language from Mary or someone else in regard to Prop 64. Forgive me, I don't see that proposed language yet. And looking for, again, I've seen a couple of suggestions regarding the reference to center-based programs. I think we need to land on which version is the one that someone wants to propose be the proposed edit. And thank you Mary. She's added a reference to Prop 64. She's proposing a reference to Prop 64 in the bullet related to the 200,000 child care spaces. And with that Mary, I see your hand. Please go ahead.

Mary Ignatius:

I also just put in the chat, I don't know if you saw it, but I think there was some concerns about page numbers. The logo is huge. The names of the people the letter's being sent to just doesn't seem important. So I think just cc'ing them and just writing their names and their affiliation at the end in a smaller font would allow for a more robust letter with all the things we just discussed.

Karin Bloomer:

Thanks Mary. Okay, so a proposal for how to get the important content on two pages. Robin, I see your hand.

Robin Layton:

Yeah, so after where it says, "quality advisory panel comma," how about to include center-based programs and CCPU? And I don't think this is negotiations because we're thanking them for what CCPU asked for. So the first word that came to my mind, center-based programs and CCPU, or would we say something after CCPU. Is negotiations appropriate?

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

I don't think we can associate center-based programs with negotiations because keeping it aligned together makes it sound like the CCPU is a negotiating for centers. So I think we need to be really intentional in thanking them for including, but there's a few suggestions.

Robin Layton:

About if we say to include all programs in our mixed delivery system. Because I don't think we need to thank them for negotiating with CCPU. They're supposed to think they're supposed to be negotiating with them. So is this the place where we're thanking them for continuing to include the mixed delivery system? I can't speak for CCPU, but is that kind of what you're thinking, Deborah? That again, I don't think we should thank them for negotiating with CCPU.

Deborah Corley Marzett:

I agree with that. There's no need for that. Thank you. But I just don't think it needs to be mixed together, CCPU and negotiations need to be here because it bleeds it and makes the public, I'll say the public, it makes anyone thinks who's reading it that CCPU is negotiating for centers. And we definitely don't make them think that. My thought is just thank you for supporting center-based programs in a nutshell.

Karin Bloomer:

So just trying this on for size, Deborah, both incorporating what you're saying, and I think what Robin had alluded to on my screen here and track changes. Again, help me with this. We also recognize and appreciate the administration's continued support of the Rate and Quality Advisory Panel and all programs in the mixed delivery system including center-based programs.

Deborah Corley Marzett:

And that would be hard to say mixed delivery system because we have to remember that all providers are not included there in a mixed delivery system.

Robin Layton:

How about... That's correct. You're correct. So how about including center-based programs and programs... I don't want to take out CCPU, but it's programs in CCPU, something like that if that's what we're trying to thank them for. And by saying center-based programs and CCPU programs, that's not everybody. So that's not LEAs, that's not... So yeah, we're bringing up more things and making it more complicated here.

Karin Bloomer:

Yeah, we do want to be looking for an endorsement in the next 10 minutes or so. So I think this is the one piece that we're still trying to grapple with. I guess a question is just, is there something specific the council wants to say about center-based programs as it relates to being included in the work related to the reimbursement rate structure?

Deborah Corley Marzett:

And are you simply saying that you're recognizing, thanking them for their support for Rate and Quality Advisory Panel, you're thanking them for their support for CCPU and you're thanking them for their support for center-based programs?

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

It's more.

Deborah Corley Marzett:

Is that what you're trying to say?

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

No.

Deborah Corley Marzett:

Okay.

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

Because I think the comment that you typed in, Karin, at 10:03 kind of encapsulated the intent, the inclusion of center-based programs following negotiations with CCPU to address the... Because the CCPU is bargaining for their membership, but the center-based programs did not have to be included, and administration made a point to include and then they pushed to include center-based community-based organizations in those items that were negotiated for. And if they hadn't, we would not have been able to survive. So that's the piece that is trying to be called out. So I really think the 10:03 comment or the edit kind of includes that while maintaining the purpose of the statement, which is yes, we appreciate and recognize their work with the Rate and Quality Advisory Panel, but also the inclusion of center-based programs following negotiations with CCPU to address the willfully inadequate reimbursement rate structure. So I don't know if that's a statement everyone can get behind because it's following with the CCPU. It's not that they're negotiating for us.

Robin Layton:

This is really clear to me. I like this edit that she just put in track changes.

Karin Bloomer:

So I'll just read it one more time before we just confirm that we're suggesting the inclusion of Mayra's edits in the chat. Mary's edit for the bullet and the reformatting and this sentence. We also recognize and appreciate the administration's continued support of the Rate and Quality Advisory Panel and the inclusion of center-based programs following negotiations with CCPU to address the state's willfully and adequate reimbursement rate structure.

So I just want to make sure, does any council member have a question before we ask for support and or opposition to endorsing this letter? Or does any council member have a question about what you are being asked to endorse? Okay, I don't see any hands. And just in terms of process, if the council endorses this letter pending these changes, our next steps here as the support team of course would be to include those edits and you'd receive a copy as well as the recipients of a letter. Needless to say, and it would

be posted on the ECPC webpage. Okay. So with that I think... Kay, please go ahead. Did you have a comment?

Laura Kay Ruhstaller:

Yes, I just had one question, and I guess I would kind of direct this to Robin, but with your comment made to the Department of Finance earlier about nothing being stated about implementation, does that need to make it to this letter and has that been discussed, Andrea, as part of this?

Robin Layton:

That's a good point and I was struggling with that as well. We're thanking them for supporting the panel. But I also made a comment that yeah, they're supporting another panel, another work group, another committee, but there's nothing in there that says they're going to implement a rate increase. But I believe we're saying it later in where you're scrolling to now that, so we're asking them, we're thanking them for the panel, but then the bullet that she's highlighting right now, the funding, the technically they're supporting the panel. That is true. And we're thanking them for the budget that we're in right now. And then...

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

We're asking them to uphold the investments needed to fund the Rate Reform. So that's where it's called out in that first bullet on that we reckon after the yes where it's highlighted right now. So that... Or maybe we could add funding the Rate Reform as soon as possible to ensure...

Robin Layton:

I think the way it's worded here is great. I think it's the up there before where we're thanking them for something even though we didn't put anything in the January proposed budget. I'm fine with that because maybe there are things in the January proposed budget that go without saying, ... can't set aside money because they don't know the true cost yet because we're not done with our work.

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

Well, that and we did not get cut.

Robin Layton:

Correct.

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

We had to be really mindful of the fact that our budgets were not more severely cut or decimated. And so part of it is requesting them to fund the rate reform when we have it ready to go, which is why this first bullet is included this way.

Karin Bloomer:

So unless there's any proposal otherwise, I think it's time to be seeking your feedback council and by way of a verbal endorsement. And so just again, in terms of historical process, we've let this just be a verbal endorsement where, Andrea, I think you should have the privilege given the work you've done on this to ask if council members could voice those who support submitting this letter to say aye. And then pausing and seeing if there's any who oppose. And again, I just want to acknowledge that members of the administration on this council historically abstained from this as they are serving the governor to whom this letter is being sent. So any questions about process before I hand it to Andrea for verbal response? Okay. Andrea.

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

I respectfully ask all of you to voice your approval for supporting this letter. Please say aye.

Members of the Council:

Aye. Aye. Aye. Aye. Aye. Aye.

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

For those of you who choose not to support the letter, would you please unmute yourself and say nay or no? Yay. I thought I saw a hand. Karin, I think I hand that over to you now.

Karin Bloomer:

So it's full support again with the acknowledging their abstentions for those who are members of the administration, but full support for submitting the letter pending the edits in the chat from Mayra and Mary and the track changes I showed on the screen. Before we move on, and this may be why Robin has her hand raised, but first just want to take a moment. Thank you Andrea. And I know Donna couldn't be at two places at once this morning, but I know the council is very grateful for leading the charge on this. Robin, is your hand raised having to do with your proposal that to come prepared for the May revise response or is it something else?

Robin Layton:

Yeah, so yeah, I also want to thank Andrea and Donna. This is something that I worked on for the last three years, so I really appreciate that you've taken this on. And the question is do we need to vote in order to have a letter come before us in the May meeting? And if so, would this be the time?

Karin Bloomer:

Great. So I think Robin's question is, are council members interested in preparing a letter to respond to May revise? That would be again, spearheaded by no more than two members of this council, shared with the council in advance of the May 29 ECPC meeting, and again then a review just as we did today with this letter, a review and request for endorsement. Maybe the easiest way is just to ask, is there a council member who opposes such an action?

Claire Ramsey:

Karin, I also just want to point out that Andrea in the chat earlier on said she'd be willing to work on the letter again, on the May revise letter.

Karin Bloomer:

Wonderful. Great. Okay, so hearing no opposition, I take that to mean support for the action moving forward in response to May revise and understand that Andrea was willing again to help with this. And is there another council member who would like to work with Andrea on the letter?

Robin Layton:

If there's not, I nominate Donna.

Karin Bloomer:

Rob and you had me there. I thought you were going to volunteer.

Robin Layton:

No, no, no. Donna's been great. I am passing the torch. Thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Okay, well how about if we let Donna know that that was a suggestion and for some reason she's not in a position to support. I'll reach back out to the council for a different volunteer. All right, wonderful. Well with that, again, appreciate all the thanks that was in the chat, for Andrea and for the whole council for this process. That concludes this agenda item then. So if we could please open up the chat feature for written public comment around this agenda item. We'll move on to agenda item three, which is progress on the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care. And I'll turn it to the chair.

Claire Ramsey:

Thanks Karin. And I also want to thank Andrea and Donna for all the work they put into the letter and for the whole council's thoughtful consideration and voting to approve. And I have to say that was pretty amazing to get all that done so efficiently on wordsmithing a letter. So I just want to confirm, Karin, you'll be putting up the PowerPoint?

Karin Bloomer:

Yes, absolutely doing that now.

3. Progress on the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care

Claire Ramsey:

Thank you. So as we turn to this agenda item, I think this really flows really nicely from the consideration of the letter where we're really pushing as a council for additional funding and support of the early childhood system. But we also want to take a moment

to really talk about the progress that we've made toward our Master Plan for Early Learning and Care goals. And as a council, I know you've probably walked through this master plan over the last almost five years since 2020. And we've really seen this as a roadmap for the state for building a stronger and more equitable early learning and child care system. And so while we still have much progress to make to achieve that vision, we really think the state has accomplished with alongside all of you some significant milestones that are really worth celebrating. So want to sort of start by just first lifting up that since the launch of the plan in 2020, total funding for child care and development programs has almost doubled from \$3.5 billion in fiscal year 2021 to over \$6 billion in the current fiscal year.

So that is a huge increase that we're really glad to see. And so I'm going to walk through these slides. I do want to just flag it is a lot of content on five or six slides. I'm not going to read every word of the slides, but these will be posted to the website. And there is also about a four-page handout sharing all these accomplishments on the CDSS website, which will also be linked. So with that we can change to slide two or go to slide two. Oh, and thank you. We just put up the progress report in the chat as well for everyone. So want to lift up first these accomplishments toward achieving goal one, which is to unify and strengthen programs and services to support children's learning and development. So first we just want to acknowledge that we have had significant slot and subsidy expansion since 2021.

We've added more than 120,000 additional child care subsidies for children across California. We have had our state preschool and transitional kindergarten expansion where California has more than doubled its investment in California state preschool programs since 2021 and tripled its investment in transitional kindergarten. We have seen paid family leave expansion where the governor and the legislature and enacted SB 951 to increase the leave benefits for lower and middle income workers, including those who work in the child care and development sector. And then we have really worked toward equitable treatment of children in our child care and development programs. And that has been through a couple of enacted laws. One to create a process for identifying dual language learners in our early learning and care programs. And another to limit suspension and expulsion in our programs to ensure that children are provided the behavioral and mental health resources they need to thrive. So that is sort of all our work toward goal one. Next slide.

This is really tiny writing, so appreciate that this is a dense slide. So toward goal two, which is our support for children's learning and development by enhancing educator competency, incentivizing and funding career pathways and implementing supportive program standards. First to improve and enhance inclusive early education, the governor and the legislature invested \$163 million to expand this particular program, which creates infrastructure, professional development, and other elements necessary to support students in inclusive classrooms. We have had significant investment in training and development, which includes both the Health and Human Services Agency and our Department of Social Services launching 12 new online courses for professional development, specifically for early learning and care professionals. And then also through the California Commission on Teachers Credentialing a \$650 million investment between 2021 and 2023 for local educational agencies to develop, expand, and improve teacher residency programs to support ending shortages in the field.

And then finally want to lift up the training partnership fund. So this was a first ever memorandum of understanding that was reached in 2021 between the state and CCPU, which established a \$40 million joint training partnership fund to expand and strengthen training opportunities. It was also included in the successor agreement with an additional contribution would be made if the fund dropped below \$15 million. Next slide please.

Our activities toward goal three, which is to unify funding to advance equity and opportunity, of course, working toward our single rate structure that is informed by the cost of care. And we will have a further presentation on our work in that regard. Interventions to respond to COVID. So as many of you I'm sure have heard, we were able to support child care and early learning through the pandemic, both with supplemental rate payments to providers and with incentive payments and stipends.

And then in the 2023-24 budget, we were able to reduce family fees, which have basically limited fees to 1% of families' monthly income and prohibited fee assessments for families with a monthly income below 75% of state median income. So that's a significant reduction in fees for families across the state. Next slide please.

And finally, our accomplishments toward goal four, which is streamlining early childhood governance and administration to improve equity. So lifting up, again, our historic partnership with CCPU, where we were able to ratify a new memorandum of understanding in 2023 to provide more than \$1 billion in funding to stabilize the child care and development workforce. And then highlighting the \$80 million contribution, one-time contribution to the retirement trust, which is a first in the nation investment. We'll also note like with the training fund, the state will make an additional contribution to make sure the balance stays at \$80 million if it ends up dipping below.

We also had worked towards streamlining programs. In 2021, we invested more than \$4 billion in child care and nutrition programs that were transferred from the Department of Education to the Department of Social Services. And then we also are working toward improving data coordination. And this is just proving more and more important as we work on our whole family whole child approach and as we work to support through pandemics and fires and other major events, this kind of integration and data coordination is really supporting that work to ensure we're advancing equity and supporting people across the state.

Last slide please. And just a couple more things to highlight. Also, under goal four, we also wanted to highlight the renovation funds that were awarded to child care programs. Starting in 2021, we had \$350.5 million invested in child care infrastructure across California. And those grants have been rolling out both for minor and major renovations. And so we're excited to see those projects progress.

And then finally, there was also support of expanded kindergarten facilities through a couple enactments of AB 1808 and AB 130, which established and expanded access to full-day kindergarten facilities grant programs.

So I know that was a huge amount to go through very quickly. Just want to take this moment to thank you all for the support for us to be able to accomplish so many wonderful things in our early childhood system and to also acknowledge that as we continue to work forward, we are excited to continue to add to that list of

accomplishments and to continue to work together to achieve what we need to achieve for our families and our children and our child care providers across the state.

Let me pause there. I think we have time for questions. So I see that I have missed a lot in the chat and I don't know if that was questions toward what we were talking about or other things. So maybe Karin, I can ask for a little bit of support on making sure I didn't miss any questions and seeing if people have questions about any of those slides.

Karin Bloomer:

Thanks, Claire. Yeah, I think the chat was in regard to a public comment from the last agenda item as best I can tell. So I think we would just be listening for raised hands. Anything that council members want to ask or comment on? I see Natali's hand.

Natali Gaxiola:

Hello. Sorry. As I was listening, and again, I think as a preschool teacher myself in a CSVP program, I look at what's being discussed here and then I look at local levels, and I continue to see a disconnect. I continue to see funding for certain things happening yet not being actually seen in classrooms. So in regard to goal two, I'm still left with a lot of questions in regards to equipping and supporting educators. I see how there is trying to reach out and recruit and gain more educators for this, but I don't really see in the practice support to existing educators and facilitating their developmental professional growth. I still see a lot more challenges in that area. So that was one thing.

And then in regard to the inclusion, really, what are the guidelines for what a early childhood environment that is fully inclusive, what does that really look like? And is there a standard across the state for it? Because what seems, at least in what I've observed is that it looks in some cases where there's just children who have an IEP or need certain supports, but the classroom itself, the adult-child ratio and all these other things that hasn't been changed or adapted or it's not required at that point.

So I think I'm just left with more questions of how are we supporting this funding and what's going out and what are the kind of checks and balances that are happening at local levels to make sure that those funds are being used in that manner and that it's equitable across the state.

Claire Ramsey:

Thanks, Natali. Appreciate those comments. And Lupe, I don't know if you want to speak at all to any of the, maybe first on the inclusion, anything about sort of the bulletin that went out around suspension expulsion. I know Natali, your question was broader about inclusion, but Lupe, I don't know if you want to add anything about that.

Lupe Jaime-Mileham:

Yeah, so I won't speak on behalf of our department of Education partners who could probably provide more highlights in regard to the investments around inclusion with early educators and etc. In terms of though the CDSS administrative dollars, Natali, I'm hearing what you're saying. So a couple things which touches on what our chair Ramsey is referencing.

First is as part of the CCDF Child Care development funds, a percentage of those dollars are set aside for training, supports, coaching, etc. And one of those buckets of dollars also is supporting the inclusion of children. So there is different supports such as modules on CECO that is an online platform that providers can and workforce can log on and be able to provide more supports and trainings around inclusion as well as on-the-ground trainings and mentoring and coaching and etc. We're happy to provide you the website of where that, what we would reference as that menu of choices is available because we want to make sure that we're thinking about the modalities to make sure that what we're doing, not only on the ground and in person as well as what we have on the platform is really meeting the needs.

And then most importantly also is the feedback that if there is a gap that you are recognizing to say, guess that is there Lupe, however we really would like to see more of this, or this is where I'm really wanting to learn more of, cetera. Welcome to that. I think I'm going to take back to the team though one question about our evaluation of that. We have some formal evaluation, but I think I'm hearing more of a comprehensive evaluation of what we're offering for those quality dollars, which is done through the state plan. But there's so much in the state plan, I recognize that too. And so just in real time really sharing that, I hear what you're saying, I'm going to take it back, but to continue to have that conversation to make sure that what we're offering truly does meet the needs that you're referring to and more dialogue for sure.

Natali Gaxiola:

Oh, sorry. No, I was just going to thank you for that. And yes, I'm very familiar with CECO and all these other modalities of professional development. I think my question was not only that professional development but actually looking that the children are getting what they need in the classroom because we can equip, again, give professional development for teachers and equip them there, but if they don't have, the environment isn't set up appropriately, the adult to child staffing isn't set up appropriately. It doesn't matter how much professional development a teacher has if she can't meet the needs of the children because of other circumstances. So I think that taking that into consideration in the evaluation of how these are supporting, I would appreciate that. Thank you.

Claire Ramsey:

Thanks Natali. Robin?

Robin Layton:

Yeah, thank you for this progress report. Could you go back to the slide where I believe at the beginning you said that there was an 80 something increase over the last five years? I want to ask questions about the that. So was it 80 billion or did I hear that right?

Claire Ramsey:

I'm looking for the slide. Was it the 80 million on the retirement fund?

Robin Layton:

Over the five years there was an increase in the investment in the programs in the master plan. Did I hear that?

Claire Ramsey:

I think that I'm worried maybe that wasn't 80.

Robin Layton:

Maybe it wasn't 80.

Claire Ramsey:

Yeah. Was it this first slide, was that the one that you wanted?

Robin Layton:

Yeah, so does it give a dollar amount?

Claire Ramsey:

It doesn't on this slide, but I had mentioned before I started presenting the slides that it had jumped from about 3.5 billion to over 6 billion before I started presenting. That's where I got the number.

Robin Layton:

Perfect. That's the number which I didn't write down. But what I would love to see if this is going to be presented, for example to the legislature and the administration that that increase over the five years be broken down. So how much of that was funding related to all of the stipends we got because of COVID? How much of that is one-time only, for example, like the cost of care? How much of that is TK? And that way we can be very specific on where that funding is broken down. And then if that's the case, the other concern I have is if it does include the one-time only stipends, what could be a problem that makes the state look bad next year is that there's a decrease in funding. So I just want to point that out. And so if you're able to answer some of those questions, does it include the one-time only? Does it include TK? That'd be interesting to me.

Claire Ramsey:

Yeah, thanks Robin. We can take that request back on. And just to be more exact, it's \$6.4 billion, so we can take that back. And I did just want to make sure one thing was clear on the cost of care payments that was included in the January budget. So there is an obligation to not reduce the funding level below what was funded, that it was inclusive of the cost of care rates. So those cost of care rates are bucketed with our funding proposed in January. And so those are not one-time payments. And I worry that my words are not precise. So I look to maybe Lupe or Jackie in the room to see if there's any clarification of how I just said that, but just want to make sure that's clear that that was not a one-time commitment.

Robin Layton:

So I'm aware of that and I appreciate that the cost of care is in the January proposal. What's concerning is that when we're basically highlighting and saying, "Look at how great we are, we've increased the budget," does that include all of the stipends that were received in the last five years because of COVID? Because those are going away or they're already gone. And so if it does include that, next year it's going to look like we have a reduction.

Claire Ramsey:

Totally understand what you're saying, and I do not understand that number to include one-time dollars, but we will confirm that we have not sort of bucketed that all together and then we can do the breakdown that you're asking for. Those are certainly things we can provide. Yeah. Thanks Robin. Dean?

Dean Tagawa:

Thank you for the presentation and the updates. Very similar to Robin, my question was around maybe some specificity around where those funds were used and how they were allocated because it gives us a broad overview, but it doesn't really tell us where they're located. And then kind of the same thing is a lot of these funds are from '21, '22, and we've kind of seen a pause on any kind of increases or new allocations that were proposed. So they're proposed, but they've been held for the last two years, like increases in slots, facility dollars. So I'd like to get an update of maybe what we see as potential for those actually being released and what was held in addition to... What was being proposed and actually what actually came through. So maybe just a little bit more specificity around, and I'm thinking it's probably not, Claire, it's probably not your group. We might have to reach out to DOF to come in and provide some of that as well. So just a couple thoughts.

Claire Ramsey:

Thanks Dean. And we can take those requests back and then see if we do need to work with our finance partners on that. Thank you. Yeah, Andrea?

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

More of a comment and piggybacking on Natali and Robin's and actually Dean's point as well. Thank you again for the presentation, Claire, that was very insightful and very informative. But going back to their point, the goals that were presented all revolve around money. They all revolve around funding, where it's going, who's using it, how it's being used, and the accountability of that funding.

But supporting these goals moving forward and getting them from conceptual ideas to actually in process and in progress is going to take funding. And I just wanted to highlight in last week's alternative rate assembly hearing, the Department of Finance promised to have the Title 5 rates, updated rates under the Rate Reform and out for public comment and the legislative review prior to July 1st of this year. So I think we really need to put our support behind that and push for that because it's being able to reach and achieve these goals and make them actionable is going to take that funding

and the rates to be reformed sooner rather than later because they're great ideas. Yes, we've all been working towards them, but when it comes down to it, what's really going to make it happen is that funding. So we have to hold the Department of Finance as they promised to getting those into the Rate Reform. Thank you.

Claire Ramsey:

Thanks Andrea. And yeah, I do want to lift up that that was a commitment that was made for more discussion around the center-based rates prior to July 1st, so people didn't feel like it was being rushed to talk about something so complex.

Karin Bloomer:

And Claire, before you turn to more online, if I could just mention that Council member Tonia McMillan here in this meeting room also has a comment. If we could turn to her, that would be great.

Claire Ramsey:

Oh, great. Why don't we turn to Tonia and then I'll go to Deborah.

Tonia McMillan:

Thank you. Thank you, Claire for this presentation. I have two points of interest though. The first one is especially with all the changes that are happening daily from the federal administration, this is kind of piggybacking off of what Deborah said earlier and what Robin shared earlier. We have a plethora of work groups and panels and folks doing some very valuable work. I'm on a lot of them. But when I look at the progress report, I'm not seeing in some cases a reflection of all that work that's being done. And in my opinion, sometimes it feels like we're running in place. So I would really like to seriously see where this work is landing and how it's moving the action on the other end, the receiving end of all this work. Where is it?

And the second concern I have is addressing this mixed delivery system that is exclusively for some parts of the workforce. That's a problem and it's been a problem. And so that's a major concern for me because folks are out there doing this work in many capacities. And when you say mixed delivery, in some cases in the public, they assume that this includes everyone, but it is very exclusionary. And so would love to see some progress in that area as well. And I think if we pull in some of the work that's being done by this, like I said, plethora of work groups and panels, this can be addressed. So those are my concerns.

Claire Ramsey:

Thanks Tonia. Appreciate you lifting both those concerns up. And just to the point about action, really want to say we're hearing loud and clear that feedback and also want to acknowledge that what was presented was highlights. And there is an enormous amount of work that has happened. So just really want to respect that people have just put a ton of work into moving many pieces forward and we weren't able to present on all of them, but that has happened as well. And then on the mixed delivery, we can take

that back and potentially do some inclusion of that in future report. So, thank you for that feedback as well. Deborah?

Deborah Corley Marzett:

Thank you for that. I want to thank you for mentioning CCPU's training fund and the Retirement Fund. You highlighted it as a goal for the state and an accomplishment, and that was important. I really do look forward to the state continuing the support to these funds as you mentioned. And I also want to say I hope that the state has the same support here and the state has the same support at the negotiating table with CCPU to support these programs and the providers where they're at.

I also want to make a mention about a meeting yesterday, and it was the QRIS equity meeting yesterday. It was one of the best webinars ever that I attended. And what was great about that webinar is that the fact that the presenters Dr. Li, he pointed out the importance of the relationship of a provider and the child that it was an active ingredient. He pointed out the importance of the years that a provider puts in. Every provider doesn't have a degree or have credentials, but there's other things that level, that shows quality in care that has to be included.

So I would like the master plan to look within itself and make sure that that's also included. The provider's mental health he mentioned, the relationship, the number of years. It was a great webinar. Thank you for putting it up. The presenters were wonderful and I'm asking the state to look deep into what those presenters have presented and know that the state missed the mark and make some changes. Thank you.

Claire Ramsey:

Thank you very much, Deborah, and I'm so glad that was a great presentation yesterday. Janet.

Janet Zamudio:

Yeah, hello. Thank you for the past two presentations. I just wanted to uplift the squeeze that we're filling at a federal level and the impact and the toll it's taking on families, on our programs in our state and across the nation and uplift that we're all filling the squeeze and we're going to continue to fill the squeeze of the cost of raising prices in all areas of our life. And with that, just a couple of comments that have been made in chat.

One with Lissete having point out how many years she was on a waiting list trying to get care for her children and the rising cost of infant care, the lack of infant care continues to persist. And we know it's not going to be fixed or addressed in the next couple of years or even however long. I don't know our outlook could be at this point in time, but just wanting to, because there's been so much conversation about three, four, five year olds in this whole meeting, just wanting to rally for our infants and toddlers and ensuring that all our planning and communications, and I'm not saying it's not, but it's like with these high level summaries that we've gotten right now, the past two high level summaries, I don't see, and I'm not quite understanding where the investments for infants and toddlers have been made.

It's good to have the big overall numbers, the intentions, the goals, the objectives that are being worked on and the great things that are being met, such as the infrastructure grants mentioned infants and toddlers quite tiny, which is great, but it's still, again, it's like trying to understand the investments for also this very population that's also super important. Because we know, it would be preaching to the choir to say, but by the time you're trying to address care for three, four, and five year olds, they're already going to enter kindergarten and public education K-12 behind if we're not providing the proper care that they need that they deserve so that families can also engage in the workforce.

So we just wanted to uplift that a little bit, maybe make a suggestion for future council meetings and based off the will and desire of the council too, to potentially dive into more topics for the master plan or help direct and give our feedback into what would be helpful to dive in so that we can be looking at certain areas of the master plan and provide further feedback to our partners as they're engaging in important work. That was mainly it. Thank you.

Claire Ramsey:

Thanks Janet and hear you on the need to uplift the work specifically around infant and toddlers. And we can take that back and think about how to meet that request because we know that that's a really important piece of this structural challenges that we're facing is around infant and toddler care.

Janet Zamudio:

Thank you, Claire. Thank you for summarizing that. And I want to say that addressing it by what families are feeling, what families are experiencing, the lack of care, what care is available. But also on a program side, is there continued TK rollout and impacts on programs and we have these spaces available to care for children. How are we planning to help programs potentially make the switch to care for younger children if that's a way to keep our wonderful workforce engaged and provide grants, facility support for them to make that switch. But also, the cost piece, families can't afford to pay it. So how are we making investments to help fund and subsidize infant care, which is so needed too. So all aspects of that. Thank you, Claire.

Claire Ramsey:

Thanks Janet. And I'm going to have Lissete and then Mary, and then I'm going to stop comments on this item because we want to make sure we give enough time for our presentation on rate form. And I'm sure there'll be comments and questions after that. So Lissete, please.

Lissete Frausto:

Yes. Good morning everyone. Thank you, Janet, for highlighting what I added in the chat earlier. I'm a mom of three and I know what families are going through because I am going through it as well. And it's been really frustrating that my daughter's going to be two in March, and she's been missing out on that environment, that social emotional experience, and a lot of many other things that could have been preparing her. We always say children's brain is developing the most zero to five, but then yet we're not

actually doing the action to support that zero to five for children. So I am thankful that she's with a family member that has helped her flourish so much, but her and I have talked about it. Socially, she's not there. So she has been needing that environment that she hasn't been able to have, and excuse me, that I'm getting emotional, but it's just, it's frustrating.

It's frustrating that we know, we see that we have 2 million families and I'm part of those 2 million families still waiting to have care. If we don't, and that money that's not spent, unspent money needs to stay with child care because at the moment, we have 2 million children and families waiting to be served. And if we take away that unspent money and put it somewhere else that's just going to make it even worse for families and for our economy as well. Because to be honest, I have always said that I'm blessed and thankful to have an amazing job, but now I'm speaking for other families, for our migrant families. I live in an area where we have farm workers, where we have migrant families. And everything that has been going on lately is just very devastating. And what our families need now is support in any way possible, including child care. Thank you.

Claire Ramsey:

Lisete, thank you so much for sharing your lived experience with us, for being vulnerable, for uplifting the intense need that exists in our families in California. And I hope you know that all of us are here today to be part of a community to work towards solving these problems. So no one of us holds all the answers, but just thank you so much for bringing your experience as a parent and as a child care professional to this meeting today. And I hope we're all supporting you, and I'm glad your daughter's in safe care, but I hear what you're saying about the need for the socialization and for the group support and experience. So thank you. Mary.

Mary Ignatius:

Yeah, thank you. Lisete, I know how hard you work for your children every day and these barriers and obstacles that keep blocking your path to be able to do that. And Lisete's story is amplified by the other 2 million eligible children that just are not part of this plan. Where are they? As Janet described, and I think the master plan I get, we have to have this conversation. It's probably in statute or something, but this plan felt like the least transparent, the least inclusive of what were the urgent needs of parents and early educators. And I just think we need to have the real implementation plan on rate reform and a real implementation plan on how we're going to meet the needs of those 2 million eligible children with facilities and all the things that are truly... We need a new master plan, but one that's truly driven by and centered by the needs of early educators and families.

And Janet said something like this call, I feel like we should have been talking more about the impact of the federal chaos because it's the early educators on the ground and the families who are going to feel the impact the worst. And I don't know what the governor and the legislature are planning to respond in that way. We've already seen, like child care hasn't been part of the conversations around immigration and making sure that child care programs are set up. I know there's a bill to include child care

programs in terms of prohibiting ICE from entering without the proper warrants and all of that.

But there have been conversations around how to prepare schools, how to prepare workplaces, but really just nothing on child care. We haven't talked about the fires and the impact to the programs that were impacted by the fires and the families. And I think there's a 30-day emergency waiver, but 30 days is not enough to recover from a fire. So what are the plans to ensure that child care is a fundamental part of the infrastructure that recovers as well? So I guess I'm asking for the next ECPC meeting that those, like we put that on the agenda to hear from the administration, like what they're doing around both the federal response and the fires.

Claire Ramsey:

Thanks Mary. And we can take both those back as proposed agenda items and reach out if we have any follow-up questions on sort of what's specifically being looked for or requested. And I just want to acknowledge that the federal transition has obviously thrown a lot of things into uncertainty and using that word chaos and understand the need to be able to have a space to discuss kind of responses to it and also to understand what the needs that are arising out of it and what people are seeing on the ground. And just want to acknowledge also how much fear and uncertainty it creates for providers, for schools, for families, for children, which adds to everyone's stress and mental health concerns when there's this much uncertainty and fear. So thank you for lifting that up.

And I want to just flag that Mayra in the chat put a CLASP resource around protecting early childhood programs from immigration enforcement. So that's a external resource, but one that really appreciate you lifting up. With that, I want to move us on. Thank you so much for that robust feedback and those questions on our last agenda item. Next we're going to have our, and I realize, Karin, I may need to turn it over to you for the next public comment period. Is that right? I'm sorry, I didn't want to skip over that.

Karin Bloomer:

Yes. No, absolutely. No, thank you so much Claire. Yeah, because we've just concluded that agenda item, we'll take written public comment at this time by opening up the chat feature for the next five minutes and we will move on to agenda item four, which is the update on Rate Reform. I think we're passing it to Jackie Barocio.

Claire Ramsey:

That's right. Thank you Karin.

4. Update on Rate Reform

Jacqueline Barocio:

Awesome. Hi everyone, my name is Jackie Barocio. I'm with the Department of Social Services. I'm excited to be here to provide some updates on the state's progress towards Rate and Quality Reform. I really first also would like to reflect on a couple of

things that have come up in this space so far that have also been echoed by our director in the recent assembly oversight hearing on the alternative methodology. I think the first thing is, is a recognition of the years long work that has built to this point in which we're approaching, and we are at the final stages of the alternative methodology. Along the way, we've accomplished several key events that have marked our progress, each building on the last. A couple of those key events include the 2018 reimbursement rate work group recommendation to implement a comprehensive Rate Reform, also the 2018 Lifting Children and Families Out of Poverty Task Force Report, the 2019 California Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission Report, the 2019 Preschool Development Grant Strategic Plan, and of course what we just walked through, the 2020 Master Plan for Early Learning and Care.

Also want to acknowledge the 2022 Joint Labor Management Committee and the 2022 Rate and Quality Work Group, which developed recommendations for a single reimbursement rate structure. And then of course our ongoing Rate and Quality Advisory Panel where we continue to receive input and feedback as it relates to Rate Reform. And I just want to take that time because I know Tonia and other folks here in this space have said, where is the outcome? Where is the work? We're excited to be here in those final stages where we're finally seeing years long of work come to fruition.

Also, other folks have also expressed that sense of urgency. And again, I just want to elevate our director's comments in that assembly oversight hearing. Also reiterating that we also shared that sense of urgency and we're excited to be in these final stages before implementation of the alternative methodology. You'll see that my comments today may just reflect information that is available at this time, but of course as Deputy Director Lupe highlighted, there are going to be continued spaces that we would leverage and use as those opportunities to provide updates as they become available.

So we'll just move to the next slide. So now I'll just turn to the Rate Reform updates. As I mentioned before, we are at those final stages of the alternative methodology process. Process-wise, rates for represented family child care providers are determined through the collective bargaining process with Child Care Providers United and that process commenced in December 2024 and is currently underway. Rates for non-represented center programs will occur in parallel through the budget development process and that is in partnership with the legislature. That process kicked off with the introduction of the governor's budget on January 10. Next slide.

On January 7, as required by state statute, the department in partnership with the California Department of Education submitted a Rate Reform implementation report to the legislature. That report described at a high level activities that must occur in order for implementation of the single rate structure to take place and discussed and identified key cost categories and general timelines associated with the implementation of the single rate structure. If you're interested in learning more about the state's implementation plans, you may access the report on our Rate Reform and Quality webpage, which I believe a link should be posted in the chat for folks. Additionally, you are invited to attend the upcoming March 6 Rate and Quality Advisory Panel Meeting at which we will be presenting the implementation report in greater detail.

I also would want to flag that state statute requires us to provide quarterly updates to the implementation report in order to reflect most recent information and that the next

quarterly update is due in April. Next slide. I just wanted to elevate a figure that we have in our implementation report that notes key recent and upcoming milestones in the Rate Reform process. Of course, what's not captured here is like I mentioned before, those years long of work, panels, hearings, public input sessions that have led up to these key milestones. So I just want to acknowledge that as well. Steps one and two reflect fiscal year 2024, 25 milestones that I touched on in the previous slide. Looking ahead to the next fiscal year, step three reflects the July 1, 2025, deadline in which the state will set rates informed by the alternative methodology and submit those rates and the department's detailed cost estimation report to the federal government. Step four then reflects the implementation of new rates, which will occur fiscal year 25-26, or as soon as possible.

Many of those necessary implementation activities which we acknowledge in our implementation report we want to also elevate here is cannot really begin in earnest until that final rate structure is known. And there are many components of the alternative methodology that still remain to be finalized. So the timing of when the single rate structure would be implemented would be subject to both the finalization of those decisions, but then also the time needed to execute the necessary implementation activities. I will flag that in state statute, if rates informed by the alternative methodology are not implemented by July 1, 2025, then by that date the department is required to submit a timeline for transitioning to the new rates to the legislature. In step five, we anticipate that any changes to enhance rates based off of more quality informed measures would be determined by the administration and partnership with the legislature through the budget development process.

And then for family child care providers, acknowledging the collective bargaining process for that space. We will be talking more about QRIS or the quality related components on the next slide. Finally, step six reflects that CDSS is currently planning for the design and build of CalSPARK, a new data system that will ultimately incorporate the full functionality to administer multiple functions related to the child care program, but also the comprehensive functionality for the new single rate structure. And then again, this timeline is discussed in greater detail in our implementation report that is on our department's website, and we will be providing those regular updates through these quarterly ECPC meeting spaces, but then also those ongoing Rate and Quality Advisory Panel meetings. Next slide. Just wanted to also take the opportunity to flag the additional resources in which information about Rate Reform will be posted. And as deputy director mentioned, we're always open to also receiving written comment. And then this is the email address in which folks can submit any written comment as it relates to Rate Reform. That is the end of my brief update.

Claire Ramsey:

Thank you so much, Jackie. We have budgeted time for council questions after Jackie's presentation, so we'll open it up now if people want to raise their hands. Yeah, Robin, please.

Robin Layton:

Yeah, thank you for that. Just to remind everybody, I am on the panel, Rate and Quality Panel I think is what it's called. What I want to ask is if we could go back to that chart, I think it was number three, will the panelists be participating in setting the rates in that report? And if not, and I'm sure we're going to be discussing this at the meeting in March, we'll probably want a disclosure that the panelists were not involved, but we can do that in March. I do want to highlight what I heard at the hearing last week was that the report will be done, it was promised to be done by July 1st. The report sets the rates and the legislators that were there at this hearing, which was quite a few, said that if the rates report is done, which says what the rates should be based on the true cost, that the legislature could implement over the summer. That's what I heard.

Jacqueline Barocio:

So Robin, I think I'm going to take your first question, which is around, I think what I heard is the Rate and Quality Advisory Panel and what would be discussed as it relates to Rate Reform and just that general meeting series. So as was mentioned in the assembly oversight hearing, and I mentioned in my comments at this time, some of those components of the alternative methodology cost model remain to be determined, namely the values or the selection points of each the rate elements. And at this time, we don't know the specific dates in which those selection points will be finalized. This is because the selection points for family child care providers, those are subject to the collective bargaining process. But the selection points for centers, those will be established by the Department of Social Services in collaboration with the Department of Education and presented for public comment in those future RQAP meetings.

Claire Ramsey:

Thanks Jackie. And I just want to say Robin, just to be clear too, that the model, the rate model and the rate setting are sort of two separate steps. So the rate model has to happen before the rate setting, but thank you.

Robin Layton:

Does number three say that the rates will be set? Did I read that correctly?

Claire Ramsey:

Sorry, Karin, can we pull that back up one more time?

Robin Layton:

Because I understand they're different, but this says deadline to set rates. So that is July 1st, 2025, and that was what was promised at the hearing last week.

Jacqueline Barocio:

And Robin, I'm happy to also further tease that out because I think we did try to articulate in the hearing, is that there are kind of these distinctions between the alternative methodology, the single rate structure, rate setting, and then implementation. So that alternative methodology is that piece in which we are assessing reimbursement rate levels to then demonstrate equal access to care for subsidized families per the

federal requirement. And then the ultimate outcome of that alternative methodology is that cost model that estimates the cost of providing care. And the components of that include the rate elements and the selection points. Upon the completion of the alternative methodology, we would then need to translate that into the actual rate structure. And that rate structure would consist of those specific design features or structural parameters that will be used to establish specific rate categories. Rate setting then would include how do we then translate the alternative methodology at an actual rate level to help inform what the rate levels would be. Implementation, that can also then include the funding aspect of rate setting.

So there is kind of this distinction here where July 1, 2025 has a series of federal requirements of us setting rates within our state plan, and that includes articulating what are those rate levels as determined under the alternative methodology which we are choosing to translate into a single reimbursement rate structure. The funding component, that is another component of that broader rate setting process. And that of course will be done through the budget process in partnership with the legislature, subject to negotiations. And then we know for family child care providers rates themselves, and any costs associated with rates are also subject to the collective bargaining process.

Robin Layton:

So then what I said is not accurate? What I heard last week was that rates could be set by July 1st and if the legislature, well the ones that were there said they wanted to implement this summer, they could. Sounds like that is not the case.

Jacqueline Barocio:

I cannot speak to the legislature's perspective and priorities, but I think in that hearing everyone articulated, we all carry this sense of urgency. We are working towards that July 1, 2025, federal deadline and acknowledging that we are balancing two separate processes. We have the collective bargaining process, but then we also have the budget process and working towards that July 1, 2025, deadline that is inclusive of finalizing the alternative methodology that could then help us move into those conversations on the single reimbursement rate structure and rate setting.

Robin Layton:

So just to simplify this because it's a lot of different words, when we're talking about the dollar amount, let's say we're going to go from \$10 to \$11, when will that actually be decided so that those legislators that were at that hearing could implement it? So maybe just to simplify that part.

Jacqueline Barocio:

I think,-

Claire Ramsey:

Yeah, I would just say that first off, I just want to acknowledge it's a lot of words and I also want to acknowledge in no way are we trying to be slippery about it. It is just

extremely complicated. So to your straightforward question, the budget is determined through the budget process. So if there was a, say it's going from \$10 to an \$11, that is a budget process decision for centers and through negotiations and then ratified by the legislature after negotiations. So it isn't external to the normal budget process, it's just there's so many complicated steps sort of leading up to things. And Jackie or Lupe, if you want to,-

Robin Layton:

I understand that part.

Claire Ramsey:

Clarify anything there, but that's, yeah.

Robin Layton:

I understand that part, Claire.

Claire Ramsey:

Yeah.

Robin Layton:

But my question is when will that dollar amount be posted so that we as the providers in the field could then go to those legislators and say, this is the true cost, we came up with it.

Claire Ramsey:

Yes.

Robin Layton:

Let's implement it. When will that dollar amount be posted, right? Because we all understand the process of how the budget works.

Claire Ramsey:

Right. Right. Right. Okay. I just want to make sure, and Jackie do we, like I'm not sure we have 100% clarity on that because of negotiations, but I just...

Jacqueline Barocio:

Yeah. Claire, I completely hear the desire for specificity and we're hearing it from everyone as well. And it came up in the assembly oversight hearing, and I think at this time what we're really tracking is it's the selection points that will then determine the values that will then allow us to kind of create that rolled up number, is still being finalized and because it's being finalized through these dual processes, we cannot speculate on the timing at this time, but I just want to re-elevate that we are committed to that July 1, 2025 date. And as updates become available, we do want to leverage those spaces that exist to ensure that we're providing information as quickly as we can.

Claire Ramsey:

Thanks Robin. Deborah?

Deborah Corley Marzett:

Yes. Thank you for that. Well, first I just want to say that please know that at the bargaining table right now with CCPU, the state CCPU are not the ones holding up Rate Reform being implemented. So I want you to know that CCPU is not holding it up, but I want to also say that my question is on that exact same slide that you were just on and you were on number six. You mentioned something about CalSPARK. Now people here, some here may know what that is, but can you please inform me what is CalSPARK, inform me and the public exactly what is that?

Jacqueline Barocio:

Yes, thanks Deborah for that reminder. So CalSPARK is more of a broader automation project that we are undertaking, and I think you'll see in the implementation report we've kind of identified that the administration of these programs rely on multiple automation systems that need to talk to each other, and that just creates a level of complexity and administrative burden. So in order to streamline those functionalities, we're trying to bring it all into one house, one automation system, which is CalSPARK and we're hoping that will allow us to better administer and better manage these programs and the functionalities and improve the quickness in which we're able to kind of provide assistance to the field by just streamlining and putting all this functionality under one system.

Deborah Corley Marzett:

I have to be honest, that didn't help because I'm thinking, well, who's talking? What's talking? What information are they gathering, putting together? What are the systems? So I'm going to ask this, is there somewhere I can go in and look that up particularly so I can see exactly what you're saying because I'm just keeping it real with you. Everybody in the public, when we're in these public meetings, we can't take it for advantage as if people are catching and grasping and knowing the different things that are being said, if they know where to find it and to seek it. I brought that up before. That's important. That's important to remember, that everyone's are in different places, but everyone wants to know what's really going on. So I just wanted to say that. Get some information. What is CalSPARK?

Jacqueline Barocio:

And we can take that back to Deborah.

Deborah Corley Marzett:

Yeah.

Jacqueline Barocio:

And highlight key examples of what is this going to do?

Deborah Corley Marzett:

Yeah, that's really, really important, is when you bring it, to break it down so that everyone, not just here and the webinar that can be seen, the panelists and all, but everyone who's listening and everyone who's listening is not in Sacramento. Everyone's listening is not sitting behind a desk, so. And we all don't have the same dictionary, but you're here and you can explain it and break it down more for us. Thank you.

Claire Ramsey:

Thanks Deborah. And I just want to point out that the link to the implementation report is in the chat and that implementation report does at least provide sort of a high-level overview of the different systems we're currently using. And those are largely not front-facing systems to providers, but systems that agencies are using to input and to talk to the state. And so some of this is sort of a level removed from the direct delivery of service, but hopefully the implementation report provides some additional help and then we'll take back the additional request.

Deborah Corley Marzett:

Thank you very much.

Claire Ramsey:

Yeah, thanks Deborah. Yeah, Mary.

Mary Ignatius:

My question was also about CalSPARK. I hear new data system, and I just get fidgety because we just witnessed CalSAWS and the attempt to consolidate and la-di-da-di-da and we were supposed to have a data screen that allowed for child care subsidy contractors to be able to see last date of cash aid receive and all these elements that were creating barriers for families. And we heard recently, and I brought to Lupe's attention, like families were still falling through the cracks because contractors didn't have access to the data screen that was supposed to eliminate families falling through the cracks. So is CalSPARK also going to be for subsidy administration and what's their response?

Claire Ramsey:

Lupe, if you answered, we couldn't hear you.

Lupe Jaime-Mileham:

Yeah, but let me have you finish your question and then I'll, I'm sorry. My insides just got all excited. Yes, yes, you're,-

Mary Ignatius:

Yeah, because I just hope that in the develop, like if this is supposed to be the thing that's supposed to be about efficiency and streamlining and reducing administrative burden and harm and all the things, like what will the process be for the field to be able

to provide input so that we make sure you're hearing where the gaps are and where obstacles and barriers persist and will CalSPARK also be connected or CalSAWS around stage one and all of that. And then the TBD on the timeline also made me feel things. That's very scary to see TBD past 2027. And I just want to hear if implementation of everything you just described around Rate Reform is predicated on the establishment of CalSPARK because, and if so, you've got to be working on CalSPARK now, I presume, to be able to be at least ready for 2027.

And I guess I'm just afraid of that TBD. We don't know the TBD of the supply that will remain in 2027 if they're still waiting for all these changes and not feeling it. So are there plans for one-time funding to keep these providers going as all this implementation happens?

Lupe Jaime-Mileham:

Yeah, so I will jump in and tag team with both Claire and Jackie but let me take the CalSPARK and this was part of the next also transition report after this one, but a little sneak peek. What I'm going to share is that CalSPARK, which stands for California Supporting Providers and Reaching Children or Reaching Kids, is a replacement to the legacy systems that we have. So contractors today upload to different data systems through CDSS such as families information based on the application for care, fiscal reports, for example, as being another piece of it. And each of these have their own separate automation systems. So CalSPARK in a sense will then take these all up into one. Mary, I definitely love what you're saying and agree with you wholly that we continue to learn a lot about automation systems, and we can't do this without you and the field specifically the families, the contractors, as well as the community.

So any automation system naturally goes through what we reference as a Pell process smart idea and that requires engagement to make sure that what we're going to be asking to do is really better than what the current system is and also addressing the gaps. Now, your second question in regard to this sounds like it's a multi-year approach with CalSPARK and what are we doing in the interim, or the question is are we waiting for that to be in play to go into full automation of rates? I'm going to pause there and hand it over to Jackie that will talk about the concurrent work.

Jacqueline Barocio:

Yes, I think as a department and what's noted in the implementation report is that we're looking at what would need to change within our legacy systems in that period of time until that single streamlined automation system is in place. And we're actively doing that automation assessment right now, but we do acknowledge in the implementation report some of these legacy systems are not as nimble, they're not as flexible, so we just need to then be cognizant of how do we...

And implementing any changes to the right structure, ensuring that we are identifying the necessary tweaks that need to be made in our legacy system in that period of time and ensuring that we're capturing the time it takes to do those changes and make those changes if there's possible workarounds or any add-ons that we need to do leading up to CalSPARK. And we're hoping to provide those updates as we're completing this automation assessment in those quarterly updates and in those future meetings related

to rate reform. But I just wanted to acknowledge that we are actively looking at assessments today.

Claire Ramsey:

And I'll just add one last thing and then we'll go to Tonia for our last comment on this item, move to Lupe for our last presentation on the transition report and take a couple of comments and then we want to make sure we give a robust amount of time for public comments. So I realize we have gotten a little behind our agenda, so I appreciate all the great conversation. Mary, to your just very direct question about do payment of rates rely on CalSPARK and then that's a TBD, no payment of rates did not rely on CalSPARK, but you sort of saw there's sort of all these complex pieces going on. So some of the more complex background pieces will require CalSPARK but not the payment of rates. And Tonia.

Tonia McMillian:

Yeah, I am concerned with the mixed messaging. I'm really glad that Robin shared what she heard, which differs from what Jackie presented, and thank you Jackie very much. That poses a problem along with the TBDs as well. So just want to highlight that fact that what we're receiving on this end are two different answers. And I know that this work is complicated, but it will be behoove me not to mention that the workforce and the parents, their work is complicated as well when they're trying to figure out how to pay their rent, how to keep their businesses going, how to just sustain their livelihood. So it's complicated on both ends, but this has been a long time coming and I'm glad we're having the conversation, but what's being shared gives me no comfort. Just needed to put that out there.

Claire Ramsey:

Thank you Tonia, appreciate that and appreciate your point about everyone's complexity in their work and how complicated it is for everyone. So appreciate that. And also, just want to lift up, again, we are not trying to contradict the legislature we have. That was their statement that we're not contradicting that. We're just trying to be cautious that we're not over-promising from the department what we can't promise. So I realize that may not be a very satisfactory answer, but just want to acknowledge those two separate pieces. With that, I'm going to turn it over to Lupe for our final presentation on transition.

5. Final Child Care Transition Quarterly Report

Lupe Jaime-Mileham:

So it's Dr. Lupe Jaime-Mileham, deputy director of the Child Care and Development division, and I have the final topic, which is a moment of celebrations for all of us when we had come together to refer to the transition of the Child Care and Development programs from the Department of Education over to DSS. And recognizing that many of you were key partners in this success of the transition, including our California Department of Education partners of that. Let me go to the next slide for the purpose of

our time together and I want to make sure we have time for public comment too, we will talk about a few updates and some of it I had given some preview about, but also just want to acknowledge that the report itself is in the chat. This is our final report as required by statute and so want to just jump in right away.

So let's go to our next slide. So in terms of goals with automation, you heard in regards to our previous session about California supporting providers and reaching children, multi-year and approach as you have heard. And that is really to replace those legacy systems that current contractors are uploading their information to DSS and therefore then we are able to provide payment as well as provide data for the field. And so it's currently going through what we reference as a project approval cycle or PAL process to ensure that as we are diving into the replacement system, we have, like you've mentioned, feedback as well as ensuring that this is something that is going to work for those individuals, contractors utilizing it too and simplify the process itself of it too.

We are currently continuing our funding on the MyChildCarePlan.org and that is also going... Which is another system where families look for care statewide. So you go into the website, you put in certain information, and it will populate a list of licensed facilities available. Providers can go in there and look at their information and et cetera. And that information is also pulled from the local resource and referral in regard to that search engine in a sense.

In order for us to be able to develop a replacement system, it is through the Childcare Connect new name for that moving forward. Once that is replaced and it's taking the best out of the MyChildCarePlan and continuing to receive feedback on how we can then do that better. And again, that's also one that's going through the life cycle, which translates to, we need your feedback in regard to finalizing that piece. And making sure that our families can have access based on their search for licensed facilities and providers can also utilize it to update their information in real time.

And then finally, let's go to the next slide. We have the Equity Centered Quality Rating and Improvement System, which Deborah, you had reference at the meeting yesterday. And that is our phase two of when we're looking at Rate Reform and thinking about how we are currently defining quality and what those efforts look like as well as contributing to the CDSS-funded Quality Rating and Improvement System. That is going to be about several more months process where that group will provide a report to the administration on what that should look like. We have a dedicated page that is going to be in the link. Please, please continue to participate and provide our feedback. That is the best way to inform this work.

And then finally, if we can go to the last slide, one of the programs that transferred over was the Child and Adult Care Food Program, CACFP. And some highlights of that work is providing more workshops in regard to a one-on-one of how to be able to access that reimbursement or partial reimbursement for the nutritious meals that are served for individuals interested in it. There's also credit-bearing workshops that you can attend also as well as making sure that resources are language-accessed, meaning that they're in multiple languages and accessible for our communities pieces there.

And then most importantly, the team is looking at the data and making sure that those interactive map dashboards are going to provide the latest information for the public to view. So more to come in regard to that there. I want to just conclude this report with

just a special thank you to everyone. We took on a lot, not only with the transition during the pandemic but change. It was a huge shift from moving it from one state agency to another in less than a year.

But those opportunities that we look at to be able to hear directly from you and to hear your direct feedback, honest feedback, courageous feedback is invaluable to the success of this division. And so for that, I am eternally grateful, truly am. As we can pivot quickly on some things with real-time feedback... And also want to do another shout out to our California Department of Education who share their live experience and continued support even to today and feel like the transition would not be able to be also successful without them and of course our legislators. So that concludes my presentation. I am more than happy to answer any questions. And again, we have the legislative report in the chat for your reference.

Claire Ramsey:

Thanks, Lupe. And acknowledging it's 11:43. So I think we can take one or two comments on Lupe's transition presentation and then we will be turning it over to Karin for public comments. So we'll do Deborah and then Andrea and then we will turn it over to Karin.

Deborah Corley Marzett:

Well, really quick, Dr. Lupe, I want to say thank you for that update and that information. I'm going to make this really quick because I want to thank Mary for mentioning the fires. I can't sit here today and not mention, in this meeting publicly, the providers that have suffered in the wildfires. I think about the children and the families they serve, the providers that are trying to put their lives back together after these wildfires ripped through their neighborhoods and their communities. It's hard for me to sit here and not say anything as my brothers and sisters in daycares have been affected and yet neglected.

The resources the state has made available for providers, for people and providers that are affected by the fires fall short. Providers don't meet the requirements of these resources the state has made available, and providers are falling between the cracks of failure. I'm asking the state to reevaluate the resources made available to those affected by the fires. Remember that one size does not fit all. One size does not fit all.

And lastly, I just want to say if you all remember I mentioned a provider in our last meeting, November 19, 2024, and today it's February 26, 2025, that she had not been paid for the services that she provided for foster care family that came from Palmdale to Bakersfield. She still has not been paid. So I just want to put that out and I believe that one person represents many. And this is a failure that should not be happening. And again, I'm asking for support for that provider for as DSS and Palmdale has failed her and the children, but the services were received and the children received quality care. Thank you.

Claire Ramsey:

Thanks for the comments, Deborah. If you could put in chat to me privately or to Lupe just to provide the name of the provider who you're referencing in Palmdale. We will follow up on that item. Andrea.

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza:

So really quick, just three items to keep on your radar. Lupe, thank you. I can attest that the department has always been very receptive and open to working with community partners, Every Child California, for example, and others and open to our feedback. So thank you again. Thank you for your report. Just to piggyback off of the comment that was just made about the fires, one of the issues that people are having, contractors and family child care, home providers, family friends, they're trying to get licensed and community care licensing has pivoted to try and help them, but the fire inspectors are putting up roadblocks.

There have not been one approval that... And that was as of the beginning of last week when I had asked about that. So I don't know if there's anything that we could do at the state level, our advocacy to help because I understand we need to keep children and families and parents and staff safe, but at the same time we're putting up roadblocks for these family child care homes to get back on their feet and centers as well. So that was second point.

My third point is the CalSPARK and MyChildCarePlan. These are going to be major changes to systems that we've been using historically at least since I've been in education. And that's a well over 30 years. And so, please, I just have to elevate to include the stakeholders that have been using them and utilizing those systems because if our input and our feet on the ground perspective is not included, it could be a hot mess. And I know for example, one thing about MyChildCarePlan, we're not able to edit our own vacancies. We have to input them, but then they get submitted to our local R&R. But if our local R&R doesn't get to them, I have open spaces, but my families cannot access them because they don't know about them.

And not all research center for all agencies are participating in that. So that's another hurdle to families getting services and making that connection. So anything that we can do to push that forward and help, again, engage the stakeholders that are on the ground using it because we have the experience that can inform what's really happening, the issues we're having and how we can... We have suggestions to make it better. So thank you. Thank you for having that as an option for us.

Claire Ramsey:

Thank you, Andrea, for those comments and taking back both your and Mary's request on engagement on CalSPARK early and with families, not just with contractors. So thank you. And with that I'll turn it over to Karin for opening a public comment.

6. General Public Comment

Karin Bloomer:

Thanks so much. We will now invite the final round of public comment today. We'll be opening up the chat feature now for written public comment and we'll invite verbal

comment as well. If you'd like to be in the queue to speak and you are joining the meeting remotely, please use the raised pan feature at the bottom of your Zoom screen or the bottom of the attendee panel. I'll also be looking for members of the public here in the room who may wish to speak, and we'll toggle between in the room and online until we've exhausted the in-room members.

I'll be calling on you one at a time. If you're joining remotely, please know that you need to unmute yourself once I've called on you. And we're asking that each individual please reserve their comments for no more than two minutes so that we can take at least if we can, at least a handful of members of the public before I need to turn things over back to the chair to have us adjourned by noon. Okay, with that, I will start with a member from the public online. Andrew Avila, please go ahead and unmute.

Andrew Avila:

Hi, good morning everyone, almost good afternoon. Can you hear me?

Karin Bloomer:

Yes.

Andrew Avila:

Thank you. So on behalf of Early Edge California, we want to thank the council for this very important convening and also share our concern of the progress of rate reform. Given the recent update, there are several decision points remaining in determining a single rate structure which will take an indefinite amount of additional time. And this is really concerning as there's not a clear proposal plan or timeline in transitioning to this new structure reimbursement system, effectively pushing back its implementation. And we can't afford to wait longer to adequately compensate child care providers for the true cost of care, especially during a time when providers are struggling to keep their doors open, amid rising costs and while the unmet child care needs of eligible families remain high. Thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you so much. I'm going to turn to a member of the public here in the room and we have speakers in the ceiling. Feel free to sit where you are.

Esmeralda Martin-Singh:

Great, thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Please reserve no more than two minutes for your comments. Thank you.

Esmeralda Martin-Singh:

Hi, everyone. I'm Esmeralda Martin-Singh with the Low Income Investment Fund and Build Up California. LIF is a CDFI and together with CDSS, we manage the infrastructure grant program, which was talked about in the master plan on goal number

four. We appreciate and support investments in the workforce in the budget and believe that investment in facilities are critical for health, safety, and quality experiences for children and their staff. And we appreciate the inclusion of facilities in the master plan and we'll continue to advocate for additional funding in the state budget as well as the IGP being non-taxable grant income. And we know that there's a need for disaster relief for ECE as evidenced by the LA fires. So that's something that we are also looking at as well. Thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you so much. All right. Turning to our online members of the public, Erin Hogeboom, please feel free to unmute on your end.

Erin Hogeboom:

Hi, my name is Erin Hogeboom. I'm director of San Diego for Every Child. I just want to uplift what's been mentioned repeatedly here and that's the commitment to our values in the budget. Tremendous work has been done by the rate and quality work group and panel and by CCPU at the negotiating table. But we really need to see dedicated funding in the budget to know that the state is showing up in good faith to those conversations and committees.

I recognize that that falls outside of the purview of the state departments here and largely lies with the governor and the legislature, but I think all of us have a voice and a circle of influence. I know we heard from an earlier member as well that the importance of quality really relies on the well-being of our providers. If we want quality care for all of our children, our providers have to also feel cared for and live outside of a state of poverty. So I just want to double click on that, which was brought up by many members, which is that if we are actually going to see so much of this hard work realized, we need to see it in a commitment through dollars in our budget.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you so much. Next, Maria Gomez. Please go ahead and unmute.

Maria Gomez:

Hi, thank you so much. Yes, I just want to echo with Deborah says. Yesterday we had a wonderful meeting and for the information that I was provided, it was wonderful. Also, Dr. Lupe, thank you so much for your work. Please keep advocating and in making those funds for subsidized kids, even though I don't have none, but the families need the service. And then for all of you, thank you so much for your work. Sorry it's lunchtime and my kids are here. I'm a home daycare provider, but I want to say thank you so much to everybody who's doing a wonderful job and keep advocating for everybody because as a providers we also need your support and also for us to support our kids and our families. So thank you so much. Really appreciate your work.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you. Thank you so much. Next we'll turn to Rebecca Grasty. Rebecca, please go ahead and unmute.

Rebecca Grasty:

Hi. So I'd like to know what is the state doing to fund care and education for three to four year olds that honors a parent's authentic choice regardless of financial pressure to have their child in institutionalized education or private family child care settings? Only when three to four year olds are funded the same in family child care as an institutionalized UPK, will family child care be part of the mixed delivery system. The 10 to one versus 12 to one age in TK, if there are three year olds present, then it's 10 to one. That's where the change came in. It's 12 to one if the children are all four years old. And that's because this change in TK age to open it up to all children born within that school calendar.

So children three years old turning four before September 1st are considered qualified two-year olds. Ironically, three-year-olds, a ratio of 10 to one is acceptable in TK, but in family child care the ratio's only allowed at six to one. This ratio discrepancy needs to be corrected. Four-year-olds at a ratio of 12 to one are acceptable in TK-UPK, but four-year-olds only if enrolled in TK are acceptable at a ratio of eight to one in family child care. As they referenced in the QRIS meeting that was yesterday, educator education and quality of care is not mutually exclusive.

And additionally, lastly, the term toddler doesn't exist in Title 22 that governs family child care homes. The lack of acknowledgement is part of the reason the system is broken. If the council would endorse the implementation of the 18-month proposal, the safe California family child care has, it would stabilize costs, provide an increase to access infant care for a minimum of 8,000 up to possibly 20,000 parents instantaneously. This would also bring age group alignment between child care avenues already in California utilizing chronically empty already existing child care spaces in a developmentally appropriate way for parents to access these. Thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you, Ms. Grasty. We actually do have a member of the public in the room here who would also like to give comments. So I'm going to turn to the individual now.

Neva Bandelow:

Thank you. Hello everyone. I'm Neva Bandelow. I'm the director of the California Early Childhood Mentor Program who is funded through the California Department of Social Services. When we discuss the transition from CDE to CDSS, we are very grateful that a program that has been around for 37 years was included in that funding. And I do want to raise up that when we're thinking about high caliber education and care for children, that the mentor program does support those who are family child care providers, FFN providers, as well as center-based outside of districts and continue to support this center-based family child care, non-proposition 98. And we hope to continue to do that in future years.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you so much. Okay, turning online to Marcella Greaves, we invite you to unmute.

Marcella Graves:

Hi. Yes, good afternoon everyone. And thank you for the council for giving the meeting today. And the meeting yesterday was excellent as well. I have a question or concern regarding the payment structure on the subsidy. You get paid, they say it's processed by the 21st. And we're getting paid further and further out regarding, because the first might lie on a Saturday, so they don't count that as the first, they count on that Monday. And if you got holiday on that Monday, you're not going to get paid until... It goes further out, like 28, 27, 25th. You never know when you're going to get paid. And so that needs to be worked on. It's not working for a lot of us providers because we have to pay our bills twice for the month. So that's what I'm bringing for you today. Thank you.

Karin Bloomer:

Thank you so much. We can take one more member of the public providing verbal comments. So if you have a raised hand at this time, please do provide your comment in the chat. We want to make sure we've captured it for the public record. So we'll open it up to Crystal Jones, Ms. Jones, please keep your comments to two minutes or less. Thank you. Ms. Jones, please go ahead. Ms. Jones, we can't hear you on our end. You are unmuted. Unfortunately, we cannot hear you, so I would recommend that you put your public comment into the chat, and I will turn things back to the chair.

Claire Ramsey:

Thanks, Karin. Thank you for all the members of the public who just provided comment and for all the members of the public who joined us for this meeting. Appreciate your time is very valuable and we know it's a long meeting and I appreciate you walking through it all with us. I want to thank all the council members and committee members for your robust engagement and your comments and reflections throughout the meeting. And thank you to Karin for her support and to WestEd for all the background pieces. And with that, the meeting is adjourned at 11:59. Thank you everyone.